

# The Forum Gazette

Vol. 1 No. 12 & 13

New Delhi 16 November - 15 December 1986

Fortnightly

Rupees Two

## Government Misusing Sedition Charge, Anti-Terrorist Act

Baljit Malik

There is increasing evidence that the authorities are misusing and devaluing the serious charge of sedition. This is a greater threat to national security and

stability than the wholly legitimate actions of those who are sometimes earmarked by the government for sedition.

During the past few weeks, two eminent Delhi-based journalists, and one of the country's most prestigious periodicals have come in for intimidation by the authorities.

The Economic and Political Weekly of Bombay and Harji Malik have been charged by the Maharashtra police with sedition and inciting communal hatred while Shahid Siddiqui, editor of the Urdu weekly 'Nai Duniya', which is published from the capital, was arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. See page

Harji Malik who is one of the senior editors of this paper, has been a freelance journalist for the past 30 years, having been a contributor to most of the country's leading newspapers and magazines. She has been charged by the police after a lapse of about 2 years for an article she wrote in the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) in September 1984. A similar charge has also been levelled against Krishna Raj, the EPW editor. A high quality journal, the EPW has a nationwide and international standing for being a unique journal which combines political reporting and economic analysis with presenting the results of academic research to the academic community as well as a wider readership.

Both Malik and Krishna Raj enjoy a reputation for their critical outlook and independent views. Both are champions of civil liberties, democratic rights and economic democracy and were outspoken critics of the Emergency.

The sedition charge against Malik and Raj, belies the faith of the people in the ability of the government to discharge its duty to protect national security and honor without compromising the principles of freedom and liberty enshrined in the constitution.

### 'Seditious' Article In National Interest

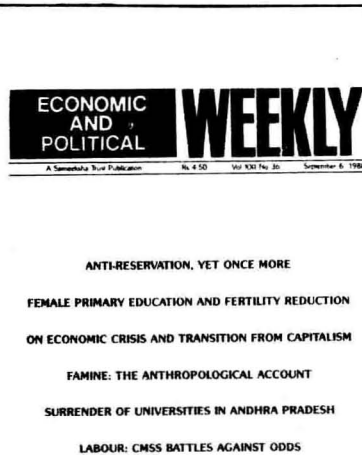
The supposedly seditious article, excerpts from which are reproduced on page 9, was based on interviews and a visit

to Punjab. Entitled 'A Punjab Report', the article described some of the army's high-handed actions during and after Operation Bluestar. Malik reported that in the case of the incident in the Punjabi University Campus, the general in command is supposed to have apologised to the vice-chancellor, promised an enquiry and removed the major in question (a Sikh) from his post. In the circumstances, a more responsible and imaginative government would have congratulated Malik for being fair in not only reporting a lapse by the military authorities, but their keenness to make amends for it. Moreover, by making a specific mention of a Sikh Officer as the one who 'misbehaved' with the students, the author went out of her way to de-emphasise any communal overtones that might be attributed to her report.

The so-called offending article performed another signal service in the national interest. It brought to public knowledge the plight of about 40 children in the age group 4-14, who had been picked up by the army during Operation Bluestar and then packed off to Ludhiana jail. The article reported that when Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, the eminent social worker and craft-historian heard the matter, she moved a *habeas corpus* petition in the Supreme Court. It was only then that the children were released and the alleged horrors they suffered under army detention, became public.

It would be obvious to any patriotic Indian, other than those with malafide intentions, that Harji Malik's 'A Punjab Report' furthered, not corroded the national interest. It illustrated that in spite of the tendency of the authorities to exceed their legitimate authority, and the exercise of it, there are still enough counter-checks in the Indian polity to prevent its misuse by politicians, bureaucrats and law-enforcing agencies.

Continued on page 23 col 5



Shahid Siddiqui (2nd from left) with his lawyer Salman Khurshid (in dark glasses). See story on page 4

## Press Council Summons Girilal Jain

Communal writing in the Dock

A Gazette News Service Report by Harji Malik

Next month the Enquiry Committee of the Press Council will hear a linguistics expert analyse how the selective use of words can, by insinuation and connotation, inflame passions, generate communal hatred and achieve a high level of deliberate misinformation. The occasion will be the second hearing, on December 17th and 18th of the complaint made by four students of Delhi's Institute of Mass

Sikhs with other than Indian and equated an Indian with a Hindu. She argued that whether or not the writing was communal was not a matter of opinion. It needed to be established through a scientific analysis. She claimed that based on an analysis done by the 'frequency count method' the *Times of India* writing was communal. This method has been used frequently in the West to determine whether a text is sexist or racist.

the context of the edit, equated with "Hindu". "so-called Sikh leaders", "silent spectators as the Bhindranwale's band of assassins", "Sikh 'leaders' and 'intelligentsia' were examples of equating Sikhs with other than Indians.

Haksar explained that the frequency count method answers qualitative questions while using quantitative measures. She presented the

Continued on page 14

## THE TIMES OF INDIA

Communications against the *Times of India* for indulging in communal writing. The complaint was first filed in 1984 but taken up again in February last year, to have its first hearing last month.

In that hearing the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Justice A.N. Sen, heard the counsel for the complainants, Ms. Nandita Haksar, analyse an editorial published in the *Times* on November 2 1984 titled "Quelling the Flames". Haksar said that the problem with the editorial was that it justified communal feelings, equated

### Linguistic Analysis

Ms. Haksar had asked Dr. Peggy Mohan, a linguistics consultant in Delhi, to analyse three *Times* editorials and four from other papers. The conclusion reached was that the communal content in writings in the *Times of India* was very high. The edit "Quelling the Flames" was analysed, breaking it down into words or expressions which equated *Indian with Hindu*, or equated *Sikh with other than Indian*. For example: "Those who shouted 'blood for blood,' 'the rest of the nation' 'The Indian People', were, in

### Inside

- Is this seditious
- The Shiv Sena Phenomenon by Brijender Panwar
- Journalism of a third kind by Patwant Singh
- Implications of Arun Shourie by Balraj Puri
- Spotlight on U.K. Sikhs by I.K. Gujral and Satindra Singh



# A Word to Rajender Mathur

Amrik Singh

**T**here is something comic as well as tragic about the case of Rajender Mathur, Chief Editor of the Nav Bharat Times.

Some time in late August he gave an interview to *Ravivar*, a Hindi weekly from Calcutta. Rajender Mathur presumably agreed to be interviewed for it and his interview was published in the issue of 7th September, 1986, which was devoted largely to the issue of violence.

In the interview, Rajender Mathur talks of a number of things about violence in recent Indian history, especially in the early 19th century and even during the Mughal days. Then he comes to Bihar where, according to him, some kind of a caste war is in progress. After that he talks of the period when Mrs. Indira Gandhi came to power and the implications of the rule of democracy in the country. It is to be presumed that he must have talked at some length and referred to a number of things. Towards the end however he comes to violence in Gujarat and Punjab and, amongst other things, says as follows.

*I completely disagree with the observation that, because of the absence of dialogue, problems are not being solved, for in India thousands of dialogues are taking place. If you start them in other parts of the world it would become tiresome. You start them in China and it will break into 50 pieces. You start them in Russia and it will break into 5000 pieces.*

*If a dialogue becomes impossible then the majority has to impose its opinion on the minority if it means imposition. That is what democracy means. Let me tell you one thing. You stop reading newspapers, etc, your vision will become clear.*

*For the situation in Punjab it is the mad Sikhs who are responsible. They keep on talking repeatedly about their identity. Now what is identity?*  
**Bal Thackeray and Surrinder**

**Kumar Billa will tell them the meaning of identity (translated by A.S. Narang)**

When this interview appeared there was a fairly strong reaction. This led to two developments. One, Rajender Mathur wrote a letter to *Ravivar* more or less saying that he had not been correctly quoted. Two, because of the situation that prevails in the country, he has had to ask for personal security and he is feeling upset about the whole thing.

## Not the End of the Matter

Without going into the details of the second development, it is necessary to refer to the denial sent by Rajender Mathur. It has been duly published. But that is not the end of the matter. The denial is a formal one. The original tape is in the custody of *Ravivar* and in case the matter is challenged any further the tape can be and may have to be

whether belonging to the majority or minority be so sure that they alone are right. This is not only a conceptual question; it is also a question which involves other people. To that extent, therefore, it has more than conceptual dimension.

## Unity and Diversity

For some years now we have had an abundance of people who believe that the country's unity is in danger. But there are also people who believe that what is at stake is the diversity of the country. Those who insist upon unity Rajender Mathur seem to little realise that they are actually hurting.

Without using the phrase 'unity in diversity' it can be legitimately said that India is not a nation state in the sense, say, France is. The idea of a nation state is comparatively recent even in terms of European history. To seek to apply it to the

denying that right to those who disagree with him. Today a large number of people might be of the same persuasion as he is. But how does he know or how does anyone for that matter know, that this would still be the situation in 5, 10 or 20 years.

Who, for instance, could have said in November, 1984, that in less than a year's time Rajiv Gandhi would agree with almost everything that Longowal had been saying. But it happened. Those who never accepted the Accord were at least consistent in their stand, but the fact remains that the government did enclose Longowal's position. It is another matter that the Accord has not been fully and honestly implemented and so we are stuck with the pre-accord situation.

One can understand the feelings of exasperation that Rajender Mathur has with regard to the 'mad' Sikhs. But it does not advance the argument if one uses such strong language and fails to go behind the causes that lie behind the so-called 'madness'. Even when one has understood those causes, one may refuse to condone what is happening. At the same time, refusal to understand shows narrow-mindedness and lack of empathy; nor does it improve the situation in any way.

This is not the occasion to analyse the issue why terrorism has taken the course that it has and how it can be combated. These are wider issues and require much more detailed discussion. It is necessary however to call attention to the fact that for an intellectual like Mathur the proper thing to do is to keep an open mind and not denounce what is called the need and the important for an open society. The real danger to the country comes more from the narrow-mindedness of which he has given evidence than from the kind of reckless terrorism which we are witnessing today. Terrorism will come to an end one day. But this intolerance of spirit is a much more insidious and therefore, dangerous thing.

During the last few months, the Press Council of India has already cautioned a number of Hindi newspapers, including his own, to exercise greater restraint. This submission is also a plea for restraint I have deliberately allowed a couple of months to go by so that what is stated here is not taken to be an 'immediate' reaction. On the contrary, this is a 'considered' reaction and it is expected to be received accordingly.

## नवभारत टाइम्स

referred to. The newspaper report seems to have telescoped things somewhat; the report of the interview indicates that much. But nobody is going to believe that he did not use these words.

If the matter comes up before the Press Council of India for inciting communalism, as it may, he will have occasion to rebut the charge. It is therefore not necessary to go into further details except that Rajender Mathur's interview betrays a state of mind which has the potential of doing considerable damage to Indian polity; in any case it does not do credit to the kind of intellectual that he professes to be.

## Damage to Indian Polity

First about the damage to the Indian polity. If someone seriously argues that the majority has the right to impose its opinion on the minority, it is a serious matter. There are various ways of describing this state of mind of Rajender Mathur but the most accurate way of doing so is to say that this smacks of fascism. Fascism means nothing more and nothing less than that there is neither humility nor openness of mind. On the contrary, there is an intolerant kind of self righteousness. It is based on the assumption that represent those who the majority alone are right and others who do not agree are wrong. How can anyone,

Indian situation where there are diverse people and diverse languages, each with a different historical memory and history, is to try to fit the Indian pattern to a pattern which is totally inapplicable.

If anything, India is to be compared with countries like Russia and China where there are a large number of nationalities and languages. This analogy need not be pressed too far, for the social systems in those countries are very different from that of India. All said and done, China and Russia are totalitarian in outlook and organisation. As such, the nationalities, while autonomous in theory, are not always so in practice. In that sense, therefore, the analogy is not on all fours with the Indian situation.

The issue in India is how to deal with this diversity. One way is, as suggested by Rajender Mathur, that the majority has the right to impose its will on the minority. This is such a dangerous doctrine that one is amazed at the intellectual arrogance of people who choose to propound it.

Rajender Mathur is 'free to disagree with what is stated above. But then I feel that others who disagree with him also have the same right as he has, i.e., that they should be able to disagree with him. However, when he says that the majority has the right to impose its views on the minority, he is

## A Beggar's Bowl

**B**hai Vir Singh, born on 5th December 1872 in Amritsar, was a poet, novelist, dramatist and a true humanist, a man of great spiritual and social conscience. He has been hailed as the father of modern Punjabi literature for he opened the gates of literary expression in Punjabi.

Of him Harindranath Chattopadhyaya says "A great scholar himself, yet, as he expresses it in his poem, 'I made my mind a beggar's bowl', you find the contempt for mere learnedness.

*"I made my mind a beggar's bowl.*

*I wandered, and begged the bread of learning from door to door;*

*I filled it with crumbs that fell to me from every house of learning.*

*I crammed it very full; I made it heavy, and I was proud;*

*I thought I was a pundit, I wished to walk far above the earth in my pride,*

*My steps hardly touched the ground.*

*One day I went to my saint.*

*I placed my bowl before him, and I gave it as an offering;*

*'Dirt, dirt', he said, and turned it upside down.*

*He threw the crumbs away, He rubbed it with sand, he washed it with water, clean of all the dirt of learning."*

Bhai Vir Singh's poems echoed his love of nature. He wrote of rivers, of flowers, of places he loved in Kashmir. Of the ruined temple of Martand he said:

*"When they beat down mercilessly the temple of Martand The very stones cried to the Idol-breaker:*

*'Thinkest thou art breaking but lifeless stones?*

*Ah! many hearts are breaking there!*

*The Human heart is the true Ka'aba.*

*Who is they God? O Idol-breaker!*

*Thy hammer is falling on us, but it wounds God, who lives in every heart.*

*Ah! many hearts are breaking! Who is thy God? O, Idol-breaker?"*

And with utmost sensitivity he expressed the feelings of the *Banafsha* flower (violet) on a Kashmiri hillside:

*"I grow low that my spring may remain obscured, I hide myself in the hills that no envious eye may look upon me.*

*I have taken my complexion from the skies,*

*And it is of no loud hue;*

*I came into the world begging the gift of humility from my Creator,*

*I live happily enwrapped in my own fragrance And feel shy of meeting the bee by day.*

*When the winds come blowing sportively to twine around me.*

*I shake not my head, nor produce a sound.*

*It is my wish to remain unknown and thus to cease in anonymity."*

So the poet expressed his own desire for an existence of humility and anonymity.

## The Forum Gazette

Panel of Consulting Editors  
Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer,  
I.K. Gujral, Madhu Kishwar,  
Khushwant Singh, Jaya Jaitly,  
Rajni Kothari, Amrik Singh,  
Kuldip Nayar

Chairman, Board of Editors  
Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (retd.)

Managing Editor

Baljit Malik

Editors

G.S. Sandhu, Harji Malik,  
A.S. Narang,

Associate Editor  
Avtar Singh Judge

Circulation

Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (retd.)

Business Manager  
Jatinder Kaur Lall

Editorial (Camp) Office  
4 Bhagwan Das Road  
New Delhi-110001.

Phone: 385270, 385042

Tlx: 315220 HBLK FOR GAZETTE

## NEWSHOUND



By Rap



# Communalism in Action: The Shiv Sena Phenomenon

A Gazette News Service Report  
by Brijender S. Panwar who was Recently in Bombay

After the formation of the unilingual state of Maharashtra in 1960, there was a widespread feeling among the Maharashtrians that their city Bombay was being deluged by people coming from other states and that their jobs and homes were being taken away. Bal Thackeray, a cartoonist, exploited the situation and became of vociferous champion of the Maharashtrian community in Bombay. He started a cartoon-dominated weekly 'Marmik' and incited communal and regional passions by criticising the influx through a column, provocatively titled "Read and Sit Idle". As the influx increased, this column continued for years together under a yet more inflammatory title "Read and Stand Up". Ultimately, the Shiv Sena was born on June 19, 1966 and Balassahal Thackeray became a mass leader, overnight.

In a time span of two decades, Thackeray's Shiv Sena thrived on communal propaganda and has emerged as a parallel political force. Now, it not only runs the Corporation of the country's richest city but also that of a suburban district Thana. In Baroda, the Shiv Sena supported the independent candidate, Jaspal Singh, the former Police Commissioner of the city whose "India for Hindus" ideology coincides with that of Bal Thackeray. Jaspal Singh won convincingly. The Sena has considerable following in the states of Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

## Exploitation of Religion and Pop Songs

The Shiv Sena makes use of religious festivals to attract people and to bring them in its fold. Every year (during September and October) on the occasion of Ganapati celebrations and Durga Puja, committees formed by the Shiv Sena collect funds and a huge amount is spent on glamorous decorations. They use religious symbols to exploit the sentiments of the Hindu masses. This year, on the occasion of the Ganapati festival, the Municipal Corporation, Thane (headed by the Shiv Sena) projected a map of India showing different states with the statue of Ganapati placed in the middle. The motive was to give visual projection to the idea "India for Hindus". Similarly, on the sacred occasion of Durgapuja, tunes of filthy film songs were played and vulgar film scenes showing cabaret were screened on the T.V. connections installed at the venue of the celebrations. Such arrangements defied the very sanctity of the occasion. But it suits the Shiv Sena because this is the easy way to attract the attention of the public.

## Subsidised Muscle Power

Initially, it was the educated middle-class in the Dadar and



A Durga statue to attract public attention

Girgaum areas of Bombay, who helped Bal Thackeray to build his organisation. His slogans and line of action also found favour with the uneducated youth in Bombay who were desperate for employment. He

made provisions for the employment of Maharashtrians from both strata in big hotels, factories, offices and banks. With the gaining of power at the Municipality level the Hindu Shiv Sena further consolidated its hold by

providing further employment to the local youth. The big industrial houses, businessmen and contractors freely donate money to the Shiv Sena and oblige it in many other ways. They depend on muscle power of the Sena to curb unrest in their factories and establishments. Local businessmen trust



Ganpati sits on a map of India as a "Land of the Hindus"

the Shiv Sena more than the police force. Industrialists from other states also contribute out of fear.

Currently, in Bombay, many people feel that the Shiv Sena saves Maharashtrians from the onslaught of those coming into the city from the southern and northern states. Though they do not necessarily endorse the policies and violence associated with Thackeray. But, they lack the courage to oppose him openly.

## Sena-Congress-I Links

Bal Thackeray has been the Chief of the Shiv Sena its indisputed leader since its inception.

There is neither membership nor an executive committee in his party. Thackeray greatly admires Hitler and believes in the rule of force rather than the rule of the people. He advocates the unity of the Hindus. The Shiv Sena is anti-communist, anti-Muslim and anti-democracy. Though Thackeray projects himself to be anti-congress and against the non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi, yet on many occasions he and the Congress-I have joined hands politically. He won the Municipal elections of Bombay and Thane on an understanding with the Congress (I).

Thackeray has preached Violence openly on many occasions and the sword has been the weapon of the Shiv Sena. Today, in Bombay and Thane, the goondas and anti-social elements virtually rule the roost in these two strong holds of the Hindu Shiv Sena. Many in the underworld have taken advantage of this militancy. They take refuge by supporting the Sena, so as to get police protection. The ruling party, at the local level, had taken advantage of its grassroot base for electoral gains.

The recent outbursts of Bal Thackeray on the eve of Vijay Dashami at Shivaji Park against the minorities in India is a matter of grave concern. The prosperity and stability of the Indian nation is directly linked with the independent and secure functioning of its minority communities. The ruling party should recognise the danger of this rising phenomenon of Hindu dominance. Electoral considerations should be set aside and timely action should be taken to curb these communal and divisive forces. And this should be done before its too late. ●

## 'Nation in Danger' Obsession Threatens Social and Cultural Diversity Calcutta Convention For Checking Communal Virus

Gazette News Service

Several hundred delegates from various parts of the country drawn from minority communities, dalit sections, civil liberties organisations and citizens groups gathered in Calcutta from 7-10 November to attend a 'Convention on Communalism and the Threat to Diversity'. Backed by a national organising committee consisting of Prof. Rajni Kothari, Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (Retd.), Salman Hashmi, Madhu Kishwar, Bhagwan Das, Vaskar Nandy and others, the convention was presided over by Professor Ashok Mitra, formerly of the I.C.S. and the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Even though the participants did not share a common political line they were united in recognising the growing threats to cultural and social diversity, which have been the hallmark of the plurality and compositeness of the Indian society.

While agreeing that there were various domestic and global forces which posed a threat to cultural diversity, it was felt that the most pernicious threat at present was that of the com-

munal virus. This dangerous tendency was growing at a frightening rate and turning increasingly violent.

## Chauvinist Ideological Thrust

The politics of communalism was being prompted by a chauvinist ideological thrust with an emphasis on 'the nation in danger'. Politicians at the highest level within the ruling and opposition parties at the Centre and in the States were busy pointing their fingers at ethnic and religious minorities, various emergent regional identities as well as the down-trodden and dalits — as if all these groups were trying to break up the country.

There was unanimity at the convention that a far graver threat to the nation and its cultural diversity was posed by the dominant elite's rejection of the democratic upsurge of the people. The democratic movements in the country were being particularly earmarked for repression, especially when they were spearheaded by the down-trodden, discriminated and minority sections of the population.

## Grave Anxiety

The convention was convened in an atmosphere of grave anxiety at the growing alienation of large sections of the people, who were being accused of being 'anti-national'. It was not noted with deep regret that the minorities, tribals and dalits were being subjected to growing atrocities and killings which were often on a genocidal scale. What was at stake was not just questions of justice and opportunities for economic betterment, but the very survival and material existence of entire communities.

## Building Bridges

A major decision taken at the convention was to further co-operation and dialogue amongst diverse communities. Interaction between various communities had broken down and the social and intellectual distance between them had grown in an alarming way. There was a need to build bridges and re-establish communication across different groups. It was through building these bridges and forcing the

state to resume its mediating role that the threat to diversity could be countered. Unless public pressure and opinion was applied in sufficient strength, the State would become even more prey to chauvinist and exploitative tendencies.

## Immediate Steps

There was a consensus of opinion at the convention that investigations had to be initiated urgently to probe the sufferings of innocent people in Punjab, the atrocities on tribals, dalits and the rural poor in Bihar and the persecution of struggling groups in Jharkhand and Uttarkhand and the Nepalese settled in India. Detailed studies of the victims of communal carnage among communities like the Sikhs, Muslims and Christians and of repression and violence against the oppressed castes and tribes in rural India had to be undertaken on a systematic basis.

The convention ended with a well attended public meeting at the Shaheed Minar on Calcutta's Maidan. ●



# Urdu Weekly Editor Arrested

## Government Bid to Harass Minority/Alternative Voices

Gazette News Service



Yet another incident of press intimidation came to light when the over-zealous Delhi authorities arrested last Wednesday, the 5th of November, Mr Shahid Siddiqui, editor of the widely read Urdu weekly, *Nai Duniya*. The arrest was made on the flimsy grounds that he had published in the papers issued dated Nov. 19 and 26, 1985 (one year ago) a two part interview with Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the self-styled promoter of Khalistan. Siddiqui was picked up from his Nizam-muddin office in south Delhi for 'interrogation' which went on till past midnight when the Special Branch took over. With a complaint moved by the Delhi Administration and approved by the Centre, the harassment assumed a 'high voltage drama' when he was charged under

the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (prevention) Act, 1985. Even though no formal charges were forthcoming, the prosecution alleged that parts of the interview were an incitement to terrorism. Why the government decided to swoop down on him a year after the article was published is not yet clear. Appearing before the magistrate in the Patiala session court to pursue his bail application, which was rejected Siddiqui was remanded to judicial custody till Nov 26, Siddiqui told *The Telegraph* of Calcutta: This is a test case for the entire press in India—not just and Urdu paper." His lawyer, Salman Khurshid added, "Siddiqui takes a very clear position in the interview. His contention is that Chauhan can never bring about Khalistan."

What is particularly intriguing is that the government chose to arrest him when interviews with Chauhan had appeared in several English language magazines like *Probe*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India* and *Gentleman*. Asked why he had been singled out, he shot back, "Perhaps because of my independent policies. But he clearly felt that it had something to do with the fact that he belonged to a minority community and was working for the Urdu press."

The government appears to have objected to a portion in the interview where Siddiqui questions Chauhan on another interview he had given to a Pakistani journal hinting that 1986 would be Rajiv Gandhi's last year. Chauhan did not give any specific answer on why he made the statement and in his article, Siddiqui emphasised that the government should take serious note of it. The fact that *Nai Duniya* is a widely-read Urdu periodical certainly influenced the government decision, particularly since Chauhan espoused the view that all the minorities should get together



against the government. The question why it took almost a year for the custodians of law and order to determine the ostensibly serious implications of the interview, can, of course, be answered only by the concerned officials. But it robs the action of whatever legitimacy it might have possessed if it had been taken earlier.

### Widespread Protests

Meanwhile the editors arrest has sparked off protests from all parts of the country. The action is seen in the light of an encroachment on the fundamental right to freedom of expression. The editors guild of India in a press release while condemning the arrest described it as "a travesty of justice". Urging the government to bring to the attention of the press council of India all such writings "as the authorities consider objectionable" the guild stated that the "government always resorts to some draconian measure to take action against journalists to overawe them".

In another statement two civil liberties organisations the PUCL and PUDR demanded immediate and unconditional release of Siddiqui describing him as a 'courageous and straight forward' journalist, who had all along been opposed to the concept of a separate Sikh nation. The statement also added that Siddiqui had "always reminded Indian muslims to fight for their social and economic rights within the framework of the constitution". Even members of Parliament drawn from several opposition parties appealed for his release. A statement signed by 19 M.Ps led by Janata leader Syed Shahabuddin described the action as "misuse of executive authority."

## "An Act of Foolishness"

Says Shahid Siddiqui

Lakhinder Vohra met the 'Nai Duniya' editor soon after his release on bail.

**D**ekhiye Saab, hum ko bhi terrorist bana diya" ("Look Sir, they've made me a terrorist too"), were the words of 35 years old Shahid Siddiqui, editor of the Urdu weekly 'Nai Duniya' when he was contacted after his release on bail recently.

Looking weary, though undaunted, he spoke about his recent arrest, the possible designs against the Press and about his twelve-day stint at Tihar jail.

### Excerpts from the interview

**Shahid, how do you describe your arrest?**

It was an act of foolishness. Every person wants to be clever but sometimes you err in one way or another. They couldn't find anything else against me, so they searched and finally found an article which was a year old and had absolutely nothing in it which could prove my so-called 'guilt'.

**Why do you think you were rounded up under the anti-terrorist act?**

I have been rounded up because all along I have maintained an independent line of thought. I have never been for the Congress or for the opposition or against them. I have

always taken my stand from issue to issue, independently. My paper is so popular among the masses that it has become their friend, guide and philosopher. This is why those who suffer from the illusion that they can gag the Press have resorted to such a desperate measure.

### Who are these people?

These people are a section in the ruling party who seem to be misleading their superiors, or giving wrong advice to take action against me and make me a scapegoat.

### A scapegoat for what?

You see, the signs are very clear the government is picking up people like me, who are neither very strong nor can be easily ignored. They just went to teach a lesson to the entire Press. Their message is clear. This act of the government has shown that the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act will not only be used against hardened criminals or terrorists, but also against the media.

### Do you think the case will be pursued by the State?

I don't know. If the State is sensible and realises it was a serious mistake, then it should withdraw the case. But if the idea is to teach a lesson to the Press, then they will probably bring up the charges.

### How were conditions in the jail?

Terrible. It's a criminal raj at Tihar. Hardened criminals rule the roost. It wasn't a happy experience seeing a large number of prisoners hanging around just because there was no one to bail them out. Even seriously ill prisoners were not taken to the hospital unless they readily obliged the authorities. In the 'B' class jail there were only two toilets for more than 200 people and one had to bribe the sweeper to keep them clean. Water was scarce. We were six in a cell which measured about 8 by 10 feet. My companions were a police inspector, havildar, constable and a taxi driver. Three of them were 'C' class prisoners but had manipulated to move in with us.

### Shahid, what should small newspaper's do to protect themselves from such actions?

I think all small newspapers should unite and form a committee to look after their interest. They should also be provided with legal aid in such circumstances, as their existence is always hand to mouth. The press should now from a 'Forum for the Freedom of the Press' on the lines of the PUCL with the help of lawyers. In this, the national dailies should lend a helping hand to small newspapers and take them more seriously.

### NEWSHOUND

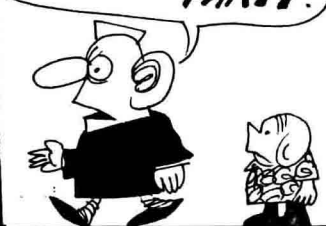
ACCORDING TO THE ROLLS EVERY ADULT IN DELHI IS A CONG(1) MEMBER!



WHAT'S THE PROBLEM — BOGUS MEMBERSHIP?



... IT'S BECOME THE PROBLEM OF A BOGUS PARTY!



By Rap

Poised to be a better building

## SHAH PURI'S TOWER

11, Storey Office/ Shopping Complex Block-C D.D.A. Janakpuri Community Centre (Near Janak Cinema)

Winners of  
Nirman Udyog Award '86  
for Elegant Construction  
Awarded by Hon'ble  
Minister of Steel & Mines  
Shri K.C. Pant

Rush! Book at  
convenient  
terms and  
prices

Possession taken  
construction started,  
also booking at site.

Promoters:

Shahpuri Housing & Finance (P) Ltd.

Regd. Office: 'SHAH PURI'S' ARJUN PALACE,

B-45, Greater Kailash-1, (Opp. Archana Cinema) New Delhi-48

Ph: 6431966-6433170-6430797 Telex: 031-62432 DEXPIN



# New Patterns of Communal Tension

Inder Mohan



**A** new trend is visible in the behaviour pattern of minority communities which in the past were prepared to remain at the receiving end of harassment and worse, particularly in riot prone areas in the country. They are becoming aggressive and militant, determined to fight back. Given the situation created may Hindu revivalism and the overt and covert moves to establish Hindu Rashtra, this trend was inevitable. But it is as dangerous and reprehensible as any riots engineered by a supposedly majority community. Such retaliation can lead to further chaos and havoc.

If, instead of retaliation there had been an urge to fight militantly for the basic rights of minorities and for justice based on equal citizenship and equal opportunity, the situation could have taken a positive turn. It is important to bear in mind, however, that no community as a whole, minority or otherwise, has until now, succumbed to such a trend. There are still many effective voices for sanity, matched by commendable activities against the artificially and deliberately created menace of communalism.

## Growth of Hindu senas dangerous

When, under the pretext of providing protection to Hindus in Punjab and other places, organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Hindu Manch began to organise private armies like the Bajrang Dal, Hindu Shiv Sena, Shiv Shakti Dal, reputed for their belligerence, it triggered off the militant reaction of the minorities. These Senas armed themselves with sharp trishuls, which have proved to be deadly whenever misused. In addition to their claim of protecting the Hindu community's interests, these Senas also declared that they would prevent conversions from taking place in different parts of the

country. None of these self-styled champions of the Hindus have ever felt moved by the abysmal socio-economic conditions of Balmikis and others belonging to the scheduled castes.

Whenever high caste Hindu landlords, openly abetted by police and politicians, have resorted to brutal attacks against the deprived low caste "Hindus" killing them in scores, humiliating their women through gang rapes and even burning their children alive, these valiant saviours of the Hindu community have never reacted in any way. But a few conversions here and there, mostly because of oppressive and inhuman circumstances of low-caste living, and they sit up and take notice.

## Muslim Senas

Now we have an additional element to further inflame the situation—Muslim Senas to match the Hindu armies. These are as provocative, explosive and undesirable as the Hindu bodies. Today we have the Adam Sena, Ali Sena, Ali Jihad and Jehadi Kashkar. They are not only vitiating the atmosphere further, but also strengthening the forces of fundamentalism and terrorism.

Except for the Jehnadi Kashkar, which is most active in Hyderabad and certain other areas of Andhra State, the Adam Sena, Ali Sena and Ali Jihad have all originated in Delhi and the UP districts adjoining the Union Territory during the past few months. The Adam Sena alone claims to be a peaceful and cultural organisations, with the objective of educating the Muslim community for its economic benefit. The others are blatantly communal. They even talk of arming Muslims with crescent shaped daggers to meet the trishul challenge. Syed Ahmed Bukhari, also known as the Naib Imam, the son of Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi,

formed the Adam Sena at the behest of his close associate, Habib Javad. The latter was a semi-leftist, militant President of Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union for some years. Today he speaks the language of Muslim fundamentalism. This is the visible facade. The invisible forces behind the scenes are the political parties who, today, thrive on communal tensions and divisions.

## Naib Imam justifies Adam Sena

While both Ahmed Bukhari and the Shahi Imam tirelessly assert the inoffensive aspects of the Adam Sena, Ahmed Bukhari lets the cat out of the bag when he justifies the creation of the organisation. He stresses that it became imperative to do so when trishul wielding and provocative slogan shouting processions led by the Shiv Sena began to fre-

quent Muslim populated lanes and streets of the Jama Masjid area under one pretext or another. He also cites other factors behind the creation of the Adam Sena, such as the filing in the Calcutta High Court of a case seeking to ban the Holy Quran, controversies about the Ram Janam Bhoomi Temple and Babri mosque, and now the Krishnanjanma Bhoomi mandir, the Shah Bano episode and interference in Muslim personal law, etc. According to Ahmed Bukhari, the attack on the first floor Mosque in Bazar Sita Ram on 26th July 1986 when a youth, Mukhtar, was killed, and the incident on 7th September 1986 at the historic, though dilapidated mosque in Feroze Shah Kotla, were the last straw.

Though he rightly asserts that in both incidents, the Shiv Sena and Hindu Manch were the initial culprits, his own reaction to the September event was the complete opposite of being peaceful, responsible or mature. When the injured Muslim youth was brought to him from Feroze Shah Kotla after the mosque had been shown disrespect by Shiv Sena members wearing shoes, he at once rushed to the public address system of the Jama Masjid and made an announcement about what had happened. This was highly inflammatory and the result was that a mob assembled and started marching towards Matia Mahal, Chitli Kabar, Karma

Continued on page 15

## Continuing Blight of Majority Chauvinism

Jaya Jaitly

**R**ecently there was a curious story in one of Delhi's weekened newspapers. It said that the Mishra Commission, whose report we know, is now lying with the government, closely protected from the light of day by the new ordinance, has absolved HKL Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler from involvement in the November 1984 massacres in Delhi. It also reveals that Congress-I involvement had been found.

What are these coy revelations, like a frilly, Victorian petticoat? Is Justice Mishra letting out clues? Is the Home Minister starting a decoy game? Or have HKL Bhagat and Jagdish Tytler private access to such news as is beneficial to them? In all cases someone is contravening the ordinance. Perhaps one should add, "thank goodness", for the imperative need today is to make public the Mishra Commission's report on the November '84 violence: for only then can there be a glimmer of hope that the guilty will be punished.

This must happen for two very important reasons. Firstly to calm the terror in the hearts of the victims and bring them on to a genuine path of rehabil-

itation. And secondly to nip in the bud this very real cause for the hydra-headed monster of terrorism. No amount of valiant Ribeiros or wishful thinking prime ministers can wave away terrorism or terrorists if this major cause for anger, hurt and indignity is not erased.

## Well Meant... But Curious

The well meant programme organised by the All India Sikh Conference at the Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate, New Delhi on November 3rd is an example of the kind of extreme postures that people are driven to when they decide to abjure violence. Quite rightly, like every civilised individual, the victims of the November '84 attack condemned terrorism and the demand for Khalistan. However the fact that they, of all people, had to find it necessary to take a public pledge to preserve the unity and integrity of this country was typical of the tragedy that befalls the minority communities over and over again. We recognise the same syndrome in Farooq Abdullah's necessity to shout from every forum that he was as Indian, more Indian than anyone else before he was reinstated.

No Hindu seems to notice that he/she is never required to declare that he/she is "Indian".

On November 3rd Hindus should have turned out in equal numbers to solemnly swear before the Amar Jawan Jyoti that because they believed in the unity and integrity of this country, they would never again allow Sikhs to be looted, plundered and burned alive. It would have made a difference. The ones who actually took part in the massacre do not care; those who did not would rather forget. But when those who suffered feel that their only hope for survival and safety lies in promising to behave, it points to the continuing blight of Hindu Chauvinism that oppresses them.

The redeeming feature of that day's programme was the demand made for the Mishra Commission report be published, rehabilitation and relief programmes conducted properly, and Inder Gujral even acknowledged that it was a pity that minority communities and victims of a holocaust at that, had to eventually be the ones to pledge their allegiance to the unity of India. Therein lies the tragedy.



# A LONG MARCH TO NOWHERE

By Donia Suri

Courtesy: The Tribune

Earlier this month Chief of the Army Staff General K. Sundarji informed the Punjab Chief Minister, Mr Surjit Singh Barnala, that a total of 2,730 Army personnel were affected by the events of June 1984. Out of these, 2,292 had been retained in service after minor punishments. Army Headquarters had been received petitions for review in the cases of 266 persons, of which 75 had so far been reviewed. 62 persons had been given reprieve. In many cases, according to the Chief of Army Staff, sentences had been considerably reduced. 211 recruits who had been discharged from service were reinstated in the Defence Security Corps.

The Army authorities had also agreed to extend the full benefit of the Army Group Insurance Fund to the families of the those who had been killed after they left their barracks. This fund amounted to a benefit of Rs. 60,000 in each case. (Previously this benefit was being denied to the families and the change in decision was affected by the Punjab Government's persistence in pursuing the matter.) General Sundarji informed the Chief Minister that this was being done "as a very special dispensation".

All persons convicted of various offences had been asked to put up mercy petitions and while processing the petitions, considerations were being given to all the emotional and sociological factors which led to the incidents.

General Sundarji's statement on this matter is welcome and will certainly help towards creating a better atmosphere in the Punjab where the issue of the so-called "deserters" is a highly sensitive one and has been used by those who do not want peace and harmony in the state to provoke bitterness amongst the Sikh public. It is surprising that these facts were not made known earlier. However, there is still concern about the treatment of those personnel who are in jails outside Punjab. These men must be brought to their home state, which is in accordance with Army rules.

We reproduce below an article on the issue from The Tribune, Chandigarh.

**T**he Army calls them deserters, the Punjab Government calls them prisoners of conscience, the I.G. Prisons calls them a pain in the neck, and they refer to themselves as victims.

Of the 2,734 soldiers who are alleged to have reacted in some illegal way to Operation Blue-star, 376 were found guilty by courts martial (of these 129 are in civil prisons in Punjab, 97 are in prisons in other States and 150 have served their sentences and been released) 40 men are in military custody; 41 are still under trial, 49 were declared dead, 23 are missing and believed dead, two missing and their fate unknown and 2,203 were taken back into the Army.

In about 50 per cent of cases the sentences handed down by the courts martial were for terms between five and 10 years. A little less than 30 per cent of the sentences were for 10 years or more and the rest were for less than five years.

## Rehabilitation

Opponents of the present Punjab Government accuse it of having done nothing to rehabilitate the "deserters". (One has to use quotes around the word because many of the men tried and convicted, or simply dismissed from service, were charged with offences other than desertion.)

The fact is that the State Government's power to deal with these men is limited, it is the Centre that has to move in the matter. The men come under the Army Act, which means that only the Army can review sentences or pardon the convicts, reinstate them, make them eligible for Ex-servicemen's Corporation benefits, etc.

In the era of hope and goodwill that followed the signing of the Punjab accord, it seemed likely that the Central Government would take appropriate steps to cancel the "deserter" problem, notwithstanding the

statements made by Generals Vaidya and Oberoi immediately after Operation Bluestar, condemning the "deserters" to the severest possible punishment.

## Promises

In the period immediately after the Akali victory in the Punjab elections, members of the new Government were convinced that the matter would soon be resolved. When they visited the soldier-prisoners, they assured them that their release was only a matter of a few more weeks, and that they would either be taken back into the Army or given Central Government jobs.

As things turned out, however, it was the hope and goodwill that was a matter of only a few more weeks. The only step the Army has taken is to ask the prisoners to file mercy petitions. The granting of such petitions would indeed be a way out of a situation that is getting messier every day.

The Army could reduce or waive punishment in many cases without calling into question the initial decision to come down heavily on the soldiers. But whatever is happening to the petitions is happening very, very slowly.

## B Class

It is not in the hands of the Punjab Government to grant parole or leave from prison, but it can and has taken steps to bring prisoners to Punjab jails where it is possible to lessen the rigors of imprisonment. It succeeded in bringing in 129 prisoners, and these men are getting what amounts to B class treatment (although it is not officially labelled as such).

B class means that they are fed well (Rs 22 per day per prisoner: 215 grams of meat plus milk), they are not made to work and are permitted two interviews with their relatives each week — more if the Jail Superintendent allows.

Efforts continue to bring back 97 prisoners still lodged in jails outside Punjab, particularly those held in U.P. where, according to reports, they are being harshly treated.

## Order Violated

The U.P. Government's reluctance to allow the transfer of prisoners is contrary to Army Standing Order 4579, issued many years ago, which stipulates that a court martialled man is to serve his sentence in the jail nearest his home.

It has been brought to the Army's notice that its order is not being applied to all equally but the Army has not responded. Moreover, following some incidents involving soldier-prisoners in Punjab jails, the Centre has started pressing the Punjab Government to send the prisoners to jail outside the State.

Three incidents of unruly behaviour in the Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Nabha jails illustrate the difficult position in which the prison authorities have been placed. They would like to keep the soldiers away from criminal and extremist



General K. Sundarji

elements, for fear that the bitterness which has replaced the high hopes of 1985 may harden into permanent alienation that can express itself in violence.

At the same time, because the prisoners are soldiers, trained in the use of weapons and trained to act together, there is fear of keeping too many of them in one place.

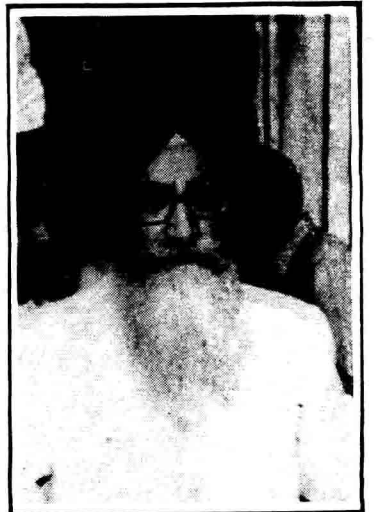
In the words of Mr. B.S. Sandhu, I.G. Prisons, "most of them are Jat boys in their 20s. Their attitude is defiant, arising out of a feeling that they have done nothing wrong. Their behaviour is having a negative effect on the other prisoners and on jail discipline in general."

"Separated from their wives and families, they are naturally clamouring for leave or parole but, under the rules, the State of Punjab has no say in granting that. As the realisation sinks in that they may have to serve out their full sentences — more than 10 years in some cases — they are growing more and more disposed to trying something desperate."

## 40 Punished

"Following the incidents at Amritsar in August, we had to punish 40 of them with forfeiture of B Class and separate confinement for three months. The best thing would be for them to realise that they're going to be in for a while, and make use of the time to learn a trade or improve their educational qualifications — facilities exist for that. Basically, this means a change of attitude. As it is now, the situation is worrying."

The side of the problem which the I.G. did not highlight is that if the prison staff strictly



Surjit S. Barnala

enforces discipline on these soldiers, the Akali dissidents and more radical groups are certain to raise the cry of "repression against Sikhs unleashed by the Centre's puppet Government in Punjab."

The problem of the soldier-prisoners is already being used by all sorts of political anglers.

## Real Victims

Howsoever galling confinement may be to the men, at least they have enough to eat and clothes to wear, this is not the case with many of the families. A soldier's wife usually looks forward to receiving a minimum of Rs 600 a month. Court martial means the end of that — no salary, no pension, no benefits of any sort. As usual, the real punishment has fallen on the dependents.

According to Brig Joginder Singh, Director of the Ex-Servicemen's Corporation which is implementing the Punjab Government's relief programmes, the families have received some money from the S.G.P.C.; Rs. 5,000 was given to the next of kin of those soldiers who were killed and Rs 2,000 to the families of those who were court martialled.

(The Tribune contacted several "deserters" who have recently been released after serving their sentences. They say that they received Rs. 1,000 from the S.G.P.C.) The S.G.P.C. also arranged for lawyers to represent the accused at the courts martial.

## Relief Measures

The Government of Punjab has granted a pension of Rs 500 per month per family (the money is being distributed through the state Sainik Welfare Board) and free education for the soldiers' children.

One of the Government's schemes — so far not implemented — envisages the granting of Rs 5,000 and five acres of land or one urban plot to those who are serving 10 years or more, plus hiring one member of the family. Those serving sentences between five and 10 years would receive Rs 2,000.

With regard to the giving of land, Brig Mohinder Singh, who heads a cell created by the Punjab Government to advise it on

Continued on page 7

## NEWSHOUND



By Rap



# Rajya Sabha Discusses Punjab

Gazette News Service

**S**peaking in the five hour discussion on Punjab which followed a calling attention notice by Mr. M.S. Gurupadaswamy (Janata) and others in the Rajya Sabha on November 11th, Mr P. Upendra, Leader of the Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party, insisted that the Punjab problem cannot be treated as a "mere law and order problem", that the government has all along blundered in treating it as such. He went on to say that the government's decisions had been "prompted by what the repercussions of its steps would be on the coming elections in Haryana".

Referring to the Home Minister's statement on the Punjab, Mr Upendra regretted that it did not indicate what the government proposes to do. He went on to talk about those who did not want a solution of the Punjab problem, who created dissension among the Akali leaders and who encouraged a split in the Akali Dal in order to weaken the Barnala government so that President's Rule could be imposed. But he also reminded the Punjab government of its responsibilities, and criticised it for allowing the Golden Temple to be used for pro-Khalistani demonstrations. He asked why the volunteer force of the SPGC could not tackle the situation. He wanted the Home Minister to clarify what steps were being



P. Upendra

taken by the Centre and State governments to prevent such things from happening.

Mr Upendra called on Mr Barnala to bring "the misguided youth" back to the mainstream, again, to discourage them from indulging in any extremist action, to institute a dialogue with the youth organisations, perhaps through social workers or other individuals, not in the government. He suggested that after the elections to the Haryana Assembly the government should convene another round-table conference of all political parties and interested people so that a permanent solution to the Punjab problem can be worked out.

The Telugu Desam leader pointed out that the situation in the Punjab was not as serious

as claimed. Giving the comparative figures of murder cases in the country during the first half of the year, Mr Upendra said that the four states which account for the maximum number of murders are the Congress ruled states of Uttar Pradesh, 2,066 (from January to April), Madhya Pradesh 1104 (January to May), Bihar 759 (January to March) and Maharashtra 701. In Andhra Pradesh there were 305 murders whereas in Punjab from January to March the number was 221.

Moving the calling attention notice Mr Gurupadaswamy asked the Centre not to look at Punjab from a narrow point of view. The problem required a political solution and the sooner the wounds inflicted on innocent Sikhs was healed, the better. He wanted the Misra Commission Report on the November 1984 Kulergo to be made public.

Participating in the discussion General Jagjit Singh Aurora (Retd.) told the house that Baba Amte had told him in Punjab both Hindus and Sikhs were disappointed in the government's failure to take a political initiative. After his fourth tour of the state, when he visited 64 villages, Baba Amte felt that the younger generation in the state was now more rebellious than he had found them earlier. Practically everybody had asked the Baba why the Jodhpur detenus were not being re-



Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (Retd.)

leased.

General Aurora said that "you have to win the battle of the mind" for which political and economic measures are necessary. The government must win the people's confidence, he stated, they must feel that the same justice is meted out to everyone. In his opinion the government had failed in this respect since 1984. It must re-establish its credibility with the Sikh public and the people at large if the public is to be weaned away from the terrorists. He pointed out that while there is no direct relation between the Punjab accord and terrorism (the terrorists had rejected the accord) if the accord had been implemented speedily and sincerely, the public could have supported the government instead of lending sympathy to the terrorists.

In his 45 minute reply to the

discussion Home Minister Buta Singh stressed that terrorist activity was no longer a law and order problem because of the support terrorists were receiving from outside forces and an important section of the Akali party. He lashed out at those leaders of Punjab who he said professed to be secular and opposed to terrorism, but who shared platforms with the attended 'Bhog' ceremonies of terrorists. By their participation and utterances they were lending support to terrorist and secessionist forces, he said, and thus impeding the process of bestowing normalcy to the state. The Home Minister assured full support to the Barnala government by the Centre and praised the Chief Minister for the way he was dealing with the situation, despite the support he received from those whom Mr Buta Singh described as doubtful friends and supporters.

Writing in his 'Week in Parliament' column (November 17th) the *Statesman* correspondent Keith Flory commented "Whenever Punjab is discussed Lt. General A.S. Aurora (Retd.) is in the thick of it. The General has been repeating one point which the Government cannot answer. How can his community feel that justice will be done when not a single person has been prosecuted for the carnage in Delhi, and elsewhere, in November 1984. Two years have passed, but those wounds are still raw he insists. Doubtless, many others in and out of Parliament, will share his opinion."

## Deserters — A Long Way to Nowhere

Continued from page 6

the problems of the "deserters" doubts that it will be possible to find five acres of arable surplus land for all those entitled or, if found, whether it will be possible to actually transfer it to their possession.

### Money Or Land?

He would prefer to see an equivalent amount put in banks in fixed deposits in their names. Given the financial burden the Government of Punjab is already carrying, finding money may not be much easier than finding land.

There is also talk of amending the definition of "ex-servicemen" in the rules of the Ex-servicemen's Corporation, but this is not likely to come to pass, either, since such a change would have far-reaching consequences.

In short, the men in jail cannot realistically expect to be helped very much either by the Central Government or the State Government. When they come out, it looks as if they are going to be on their own and will have to start from scratch.

### Ticklish Issue

The case of the "deserters" is one which has right on all sides. On the one hand, an army without discipline is no army. A soldier who, for any reason, breaks the rules cannot expect to be fed chocolate pudding when he's caught.

On the other hand, the ethos

of the Sikh Regiment (to which most of the affected soldiers belong) is deeply religious. Recruits recite the famous prayer, "De Shiva Var Mohe" as their oath of service. At the time of battle the Guru Granth Sahib is carried to the forming-up line and the ideal set before the soldiers is the Khalsa Panth of Guru Gobind Singh.

In other words, the Army fosters strong religious sentiments in these troops to enhance their willingness to fight and die for the country. But, then, in the extraordinary situation of June 6, 1984, the soldiers were punished for acting in accordance with the same religious sentiments the Army has gone to such lengths to inculcate.

### Discriminatory

There is also the matter of precedents which are quoted by many Sikh servicemen. In the 1965 war, the Madras and Bihar Regiments allegedly ran away from the morchas, abandoning guns in their flight. These men were taken back into the Army and, in later years, some of their officers even became Major Generals.

The behaviour of another regiment at the time of Operation Bluestar is also cited. It is alleged that soldiers of the Madras Regiment, who were deployed in houses in the vicinity of the Golden Temple, were caught trying to carry away valuable domestic goods. But then the matter was hushed up and

they were let off.

To many Sikhs, the treatment meted out to the "deserters" appears discriminatory and vindictive. They view it as a political problem and not simply as a matter of military discipline. As they reason it out, the Army is subordinate to the Central Government, which is in the hands of the Congress Party.

### Wrong Strategy

When it comes to such remedial measures as mercy petitions, it is felt that the primary consideration will be the political repercussions — if the Army is "merciful" there may be a negative response in many States. But if the Army is not "merciful", there will be a negative response in Punjab. Which pill will be more bitter to the Union Government and the Congress Party?

From the side of the Central Government, the preferred approach seems to be hold out hope, sit tight and wait for matters to eventually cool down on their own. This strategy is not working in the villages of Punjab.

Journalists doing grassroots stories in the State have the same experience in village after village. The sarpanch, more often than not, turns out to be a retired havildar and, in pronouncing his solution to the "Punjab problem", the first thing he comes out with is "faujia nu wapas laina chaida". The court martialled and dismissed soldiers are not forgotten men. ●

The  
Forum  
Gazette

A  
NEW  
NATIONAL  
FORTNIGHTLY  
FOCUSSING  
ON

- Minority Rights
- Civil Liberties
- Equality for Women
- Democratic Values
- Environmental Protection

**KOHLI**  
PrintoGraphics

PHOTOTYPESETTING, WORD PROCESSING  
BY WP, ELECTRONIC TYPING, ELECTROSTAT  
PHOTOSTAT, OFFSET PRINTING ROTA PRESS  
14, Municipal Market, Connaught Circus  
New Delhi-110001 Phones: 352471, 325509, 325559



**T**he militant youth belonging to various factions virtually ruled the Golden Temple Complex for two days when they organised three functions within its precincts on October 31 and November 1. A number of frontline leaders, who are wanted by the authorities, managed to participate in the functions and to slip away thereafter.

The All-India Sikh Students Federation (Gurjit) held a "Shaheed Smagam" at Manji Sahib on October 31 in observance of the second "martyrdom" day of Beant Singh, an assassin of Mrs Indira Gandhi. Mrs Piar Kaur, mother of Satwant Singh, another assassin of Mrs Gandhi was honoured and presented with a "Bhai Sukha Singh Mehtab Singh Gold Medal" for "avenging the army attack" on the holiest shrine in June, 1984. The families of those "martyrs", who were killed in "fake" encounters were also honoured.

A group of over one dozen youths took Mrs Bimal Khalsa to the stage swirling their unsheathed kirpans. Some of them pinned coloured photographs of Mrs Gandhi with her face smeared with black ink. Some youths also raised pro-Khalistan slogans and hoisted a 'kesri' flag.

The congregation adopted seven resolutions reaffirming its stand to continue the "struggle for achieving the goal of a separate homeland for the Sikhs". The resolutions eulogised the "killers" of Mrs Gandhi, General A.S. Vaidya and Mr Lalit Maken and those who

## Factional Extremism at Manji Sahib

From Harbir Singh Bhanwar in Amritsar

recently attempted to assassinate Mr Rajiv Gandhi and Mr J.F. Ribeiro.

Paying rich tributes to the "martyrs", the gathering urged the Sikhs to follow in their footsteps and "avenge the atrocities on Sikhs".

The Chief Minister, Mr Surjit Singh Barnala and his Finance Minister, Mr. Balwant Singh were dubbed as "Lakhpat Rai and Jaspat Rai", who connived with the Moghuls to commit atrocities on the Sikhs in the 18th century.



Militancy in the Golden Temple

Earlier in the day, a slab on the basement of the new building of the Akali Takht was laid, with thousands of devotees taking part in this 'holy' task.

In their controversial "Sarbat Khalsa" convention summoned by Baba Gurbachan Singh Manochahal, who was appointed acting "Jathedar" of the Akal Takht, the militant functions "excommunicated" Mr Barnala, Mr Balwant Singh and the five Sikh high priests from the Sikh-Panth. The "gurmata" adopted in the congregation warned the high priests not to exercise any power from the seat of their respective offices.

Mr Barnala and Mr Balwant Singh were "excommunicated" as they repeatedly "indulged in anti-panthic activities" and ordered the police action in the Golden Temple on April 30 "at the behest of the Centre" and for "killings of the innocent Sikh youth in fake encounters". The Singh 'Sangat' was directed to snatch their "roti-beti" (bread and daughter) relations with both these leaders.

A resolution endorsed the announcement about the establishment of "Khalistan" made by the "Panthic Committee" from the precincts of the Temple on April 29 last.

Slogans in favour of "Khalistan" and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale were raised from

the rostrum.

Another resolution condemned the Central and the Punjab Governments for having let loose "a reign of terror and perpetrating atrocities on the Sikhs". The congregation demanded the release of Sikh-youths detained in Jodhpur are reinstatement of army deserters.

### Longowal Condemned

Yet another resolution condemned the mass media for projecting Sant Harchand Singh Longowal as a "martyr" and "leader of the Sikhs" since he "betrayed" the Panth by signing the Accord. The Rajiv-Longowal Accord was consigned to the dustbin. Similarly the draft for the proposed legislation of the All India Gurdwara Act was outrightly rejected as it was prepared by the "pseudo-Sikh intellectuals" to please their "masters in Delhi".

Due to tight security arrangements around the Golden Temple Complex neither Baba Manochahal, who convened the congregation nor the Panthic Committee could attend the convention. Since Baba Manochahal was elevated to the office of acting "Jathedar" of the Akal Takht, in his place Mr Subeg Singh was included in the Panthic Committee. Another

member, Mr Aroor Singh, who "voluntarily" resigned, was re-

placed with Mr Udai Singh. Mr Aroor Singh, however, later challenged his "expulsion" and claimed that neither had he resigned from the Committee nor was he consulted to draft the "gurmata".

### Resolutions Rejected

The Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Giani Kirpal Singh rejected all the resolutions adopted in the convention. Claiming that only the Chief of Akal Takht was empowered to convene a "Sarbat Khalsa" convention, he described the convention as a "meeting called by a faction of the All-India Sikh Students Federation". He appealed to the Sikh "sangar" not to give any importance to the resolutions adopted by the "so-called convention".

The Punjab Government also condemned the convention, describing its organisers as Khalistan activists and separatists "who had been acting on behalf of certain foreign powers inimical to India."

Meanwhile, addressing another function at Manji Sahib on the Dewali day, the acting Convener of the "United" Akali Dal, Baba Joginder Singh announced that he would launch a vigorous "Amrit parchar" campaign and raise a "Guru-ki-Fauj" (Guru's army) to fight the "injustice being done against the Sikhs". He said he would start from Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of the birthday of Guru Nanak on November 16 and terminate his campaign at

Talwandi on January 6 next, the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh. \*

## Overseas Sikh Spokesman Calls for Dialogue on Punjab

### Rejects Direct Role For Sikhs Abroad

From Satindra Singh in Washington

**W**ASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER, 26. Ganga Singh Dhillon, whose declaration that "Sikhs are a nation" a little over five years ago at Chandigarh sowed the seeds of the current Punjab crisis, in an exclusive talk with me here today vehemently reiterated that "the only solution of that festering problem is the unreserved recognition of the right of the Sikhs to self-determination."

But he was "ever prepared", Mr. Dhillon said, to discuss with Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi any alternative proposal without pre-conceived notions. However, to create a congenial atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue, Dhillon said that Government of India should release all Sikh detainees, grant general amnesty to army deserters, withdraw para-military forces from Punjab, stop fake police encounters, make a solemn public declaration to protect the lives and property of the Sikhs, both inside and outside Punjab, immediately withdraw all restrictions on the visits of overseas Sikhs to their homeland and allow foreign press and humanitarian organisations like the Red Cross, Amnesty International, and representatives of the United Nations organisation to visit Punjab.

Moreover, Mr. Dhillon said any proposal from Mr. Gandhi's

government should take cognizance of the prevalent sentiments of the Sikhs living in India and abroad and the radically changed political syndrome since Operation Blue Star and anti-Sikh pogroms in November 1984.

### Decisions Regarding Punjab be taken in India

He, however, made it clear that a final decision would be taken only by Sikhs living in the sub-continent in general and the Sikh youth in particular, "and not by us who are sympathetic to their struggle for self-determination and survival from abroad."

Unlike most separatist and extremist leaders I have met during the course of 34 years of my journalistic career, Mr. Dhillon neither roars nor thunders. He is too suave, sober, and sophisticated. He answers even the most embarrassing questions with rare indulgence and fortitude. He never tries to score a point but always attempts to take even his denigrators and detractors with him by presenting his viewpoint in a sternly logical manner.

Throughout my hour-long interview with Mr. Dhillon, I did not detect even a hint of bitterness or rancour in his voice or words. He did not waste his or my time demolishing the stand

of his opponents. On the contrary, he presented the case of what he called "the much-aligned Sikh people" like a seasoned lawyer with consummate skill, bordering on artistry.

At 51, Dhillon seems to have mellowed down beyond his years. Otherwise, he looks much younger than his age. Medium statured, sprightly and dapper with a well-kept figure and only a few streaks of grey hair in his thick set beard, Mr. Dhillon has the look of a prosperous but ambitious business executive.

### Possibilities of Solution within the Constitution

When asked if a solution could not be found within the Indian constitution, Mr. Dhillon said, "that as the Delhi rulers had gone back on their several solemn promises given to the 'Sikh Nation' before independence, they have lost all credibility with our people, especially after they invaded the Sikh shrines in Punjab and let loose Hindu hordes to murder innocent Sikh men, women and children throughout northern India following Indira Gandhi's assassination in November 1984. Even when the two Mughal rulers of Delhi Jehangir and Aurangzeb, ordered the execution of the fifth and the ninth Sikh Gurus, Arjun Dev and Tegh Bagadur, respectively, on char-

ges of treason, no reprisals were allowed, much less engineered, against the Sikhs in Lahore, Delhi or elsewhere. Even during the partition riots of 1947, seldom, if ever, was a Gurdwara, a Granthi or the Holy Granth made the target. But, during the November 1984 riots, this trinity was on the top of the list of the Hindu marauders."

Regretting lack of sense of history "even among well-meaning and highly educated Hindus", Mr. Dhillon said, if they would only try to make good this deficiency of theirs, they would instantly realise that no



nation could be kept permanently submerged by imperialist, neo-colonialist or hegemonic powers. "Israel has re-emerged as an independent nation after the lapse of nearly 2000 years; Poland was reborn in 1919 after having been dismembered some 150 years ago, and both Sudan and Egypt came into their own in the post Second World War period after having been submerged in the Turkish and British empires for pretty long periods," he added.

"The Sikhs, who were cheated of their sovereign state by the British in 1849 and illegally handed over to Hindu India 98 years later," Mr. Dhillon said, were now only struggling to recover their "legitimate patrimony". "They were neither asking for the moon, nor for someone else's share" the Sikh separatist leader said.

Mr. Dhillon, vehemently denied the charge that overseas Sikhs are encouraging or financing "Sikh extremists" in India. "We only share the anger and anguish of our brothers in India, and we are trying our level best to ensure that their human and religious rights are neither denied nor infringed."

He was of the firm opinion that extremism was bred and nurtured by state terrorism and that most of the despicable violent acts attributed to the "so-called Sikh extremists were, in fact, the acts of the local police, para-military forces, and Indian intelligence agencies. "The Sikh youth, who are fighting for their birth right are deliberately and maliciously being blamed by Hindu chauvinists," Mr. Dhillon concluded. \*



# IS THIS SEDITION

**An excerpt from Harji Malik's article, A Punjab Report, in the Economic and Political Weekly**

**T**he place; Punjabi University campus in Patiala. The date: the last week of July 1984. The time: about 10 pm. A group of Sikh students accompanied by the dean of student welfare and two other faculty members, also Sikhs, walked over to see the vice-chancellor to discuss a minor problem. (It is customary for students to meet after dinner for such discussions and evening visits to the VC are normal procedure.) Having met the VC the group started back to the hostel. A mobile army patrol — these days the army maintains order on the campus — stopped them and asked what they were doing.

The students explained they were returning home from the VC's residence. The major in command, himself a Sikh, asked what they had gone to discuss. The boys, perhaps tensed up under present conditions, told him it was none of his business. The major, armed, ordered them to get down on the ground and crawl from one point of the road to another. The dean of student welfare protested, stating that the boys had done nothing wrong. Asked by the major to identify himself, the dean did so, along with his two companions. The major ordered the three of them to stand on one side, with their hands above their heads, while the boys crawled.

In Punjab today, at the point of a gun, there was no alternative. The dean and his colleagues obeyed. When the boys had finished the crawling exercise, the major demanded to know who the leaders were. Angry and defiant, three boys stepped forward, one of them the president of the students' union. The patrol took the three to a guest-house nearby, and allegedly beat them up, the president so badly that he was

unable to appear for his examination paper the next day.

The morning after the incident the entire university faculty went on strike. The vice-chancellor protested strongly to the officer commanding, the general in command in Patiala is said to have apologised, and promised an inquiry, and the major involved was immediately transferred.

In Patiala, two days after the incident, I heard the above facts from the head of the English department of the university. In Sangrur I was told about Hakam Singh. The 23-year-old Sikh was picked up from his home in a village near Sangrur by the security forces for interrogation. Some days later his body was returned to the family, who were informed that he had been killed in an 'encounter'. On examination of the body it is alleged that his finger nails had been torn out, and his chest bore deep burns as if a hot metal rod had been placed there. A respected, responsible advocate of Sangrur who had attended the boy's *bhog* told me these details.

He also told me about a young Sikh, disabled since childhood, who now could walk only with difficulty. He too was picked up for interrogation and alleges that he was beaten up. His story is that his interrogator, a Major Yadav, repeatedly abused Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and Guru Gobind Singh. The young man told the officer that while he could abuse Bhindranwale, as a fellow Indian why did he abuse the Guru? The major, according to his prisoner, retorted, "Who told you that you are also an Indian?"

**K**arnail Kaur of village Kanjra in Sangrur district, 24 to 25-year-old mother of three daughters, was still nursing a deep wound in her thigh where she was hit by a large piece of shrapnel from a grenade on June 5 in the Golden Temple complex, when I met her on my visit to Sangrur. Her father, Jang Singh, was wounded in the leg.

Both are thankful to be alive.

These are some of the things I learned on a brief visit to the Punjab last month. I found that what seem to be unfounded rumours, wild exaggerations in Delhi, often turn out to be eye-witness and/or first hand accounts in Punjab. Delhi is one world. Punjab another. Delhi, to most people is what official media would have them believe. The few newspaper reports or opinion articles which contradict the official picture catch the attention of a minority, many of whom treat them as biased stories. A few believe. But in Punjab the reality is very different from Delhispeak, there is no other topic of conversation, and the reality comes across in face to face confrontations.

One example is indicative. In Sangrur I heard about 30 to 40 children between the ages of 4 to 14 who are in Ludhiana jail. Villagers visiting other detenus in jail have talked of children seeing them and calling out 'Baba! Baba!' to them. I was told that these children had been picked up by the army in Darbar Sahib and other gurdwaras during Operation Blue Star, that either their parents had been killed or are missing. It is also possible that parents separated from their children in the terror, believe that their children are dead for to date no casualty or missing lists have been issued by the security forces or any other authority.

I was told that the army refused to release these children without proper proof of their parents. I wondered how the army authorities expect people to come forward to claim their children when no one knows where they are. If the parents are dead, or missing, the next of kin presumably think that the children too are dead. Meanwhile, these children have been in jail for three months for no valid reason. The story was one of those which seemed so far-fetched at the time, so incredible that one could not believe it, even in the Punjab.

But a report appeared in the Chandigarh *Tribune* and people brought it to the notice of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, who moved the Supreme Court with a *habeas corpus* petition. It seems that there are children in Ludhiana jail, 28 according to the report, and a district judge was ordered by the Supreme Court to submit a report on them. On September 10, a Calcutta daily published an interview with 10 of these youngsters, released in the custody of a sessions judge in which these 10 to 16-year-olds have alleged that they were

submitted to torture by the army during interrogation. Twelve children have still to be released. So the incredible becomes reality. But still, outside Punjab, there is a reluctance to believe. Journalists who have heard of events from those who were there, who have suffered, who are desperately waiting to know what has happened to near and dear ones, hesitate to report; editors, far from Punjab, can assess such reports as 'hysterical'. But as the past three months have proved, truth and reality will be out.



Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay — who picked up a *Tribune* news item about the children who were allegedly mistreated by the Army and lodged in Ludhiana jail. She filed a *habeas corpus* petition for the children in the Supreme Court. This was part of the content of Harji Malik's article.

## What Constitutes Sedition?

**Lawyer Indira Jaising on the definition of the term 'sedition' in the journal, The Lawyers**

**W**hat is Sedition? Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) defines sedition as follows:

Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards the government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which, fine may be added, or with imprisonment, which may ex-

tend to three years, to which may added, or with fine.

Explanation 1: The expression 'disaffection' includes disloyalty and feelings of enmity.

Explanation 2: Comments expressing disapprobation of the measures of the government with a view to obtain their alteration by lawful means, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an offence under this section.

Explanation 3: Comments expressing disapprobation of the administration or other action of the government, without exciting or attempting to excite hatred, contempt or disaffection, do not constitute an of-

fence under this section.

The Supreme Court has observed: "If on the other hand we were to hold that even without any tendency to disorder or intention to create disturbance of law and order by the use of words written or spoken, which merely create disaffection or feelings of enmity against the government, the offence of sedition is complete, then such an interpretation of the sections would make them unconstitutional in view of Article 19(1)(a) read with Clause (2) ... the section aims at rendering penal only such activities as would be intended or have a tendency to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resort to violence."

## The Military View

**Military Chief PRO Commander H M Gori's letter refuting points raised in Malik's article**

**I**t has been alleged in the article 'A Punjab Report', by Harji Malik, published in your esteemed weekly of September 15, 1984, that army personnel had thrown hand grenades on innocent persons including women and children in the Golden Temple, Amritsar on June 5. According to the author, this had resulted in total panic and terror and some had fallen wounded and others died.

I have been directed to clarify that no such inhuman act was committed by the Army and no fire and grenades were directed towards pilgrims or innocent

persons including women and children. In fact, the hand grenades were thrown on the women and children by the terrorists.

The above is further substantiated by one of your readers, Bakshish Singh, in his letter to the Editor (October 6) pointing out that Harji Malik's 'A Punjab Report' is not entirely correct.

In view of above, you are requested, to publish suitable comment in your weekly to clear this wrong impression about the Army which is fair, apolitical, disciplined and a cohesive national force committed to safeguarding the nation's integrity.

CDR HM GORI  
Chief Public Relations Officer,  
Ministry of Defence,  
Bombay.



# This Too Will Pass

Sagri Ramdas

**A young 'vet' describes her struggle to overcome discrimination as a student of a discipline which has been considered to be a male preserve**

**F**our long long years of tears and laughter; extreme depression and exhilarating happiness. Four years in which there has developed in me a gradual growth of confidence in what I am doing, and a conviction that my choice of a career in veterinary medicine has been one of the most sensible decisions I have taken in all my twenty one years.

Being a woman student in what has traditionally been a male stronghold—namely the world of professions, has been an eye opener. It has taken me right out of my protected and idealistic school days and flung me into the 'real world'. The process has toughened me as it has also caused many of my dearly held beliefs to go crashing around me.

Despite a relatively liberal upbringing, my sisters and I led quite a protected life at home. Of course we had to face the daily 'cat calls' and whistles on the way to school but we always returned to the secure and progressive environment of the home, where our parents and friends alike discussed terms such as "female inferiority", "the weaker sex" and "male dominance" on an academic level. We never really imagined that these could be firmly held beliefs by 'educated' people in the academic and scientific world. No, it was after all only the uneducated, boorish, 'cat calling' street loafer who held such views and expressed them in the alleyways and streets of the city.

## Exploded Illusions

Yet, it has been exposure to and immersion in this much acclaimed 'scientific and academic environment' that has exploded all my illusions as to the 'equality of the sexes'. When I decided to specialise in veterinary medicine, I did not think of my choice in terms of a 'male' career versus a 'female' career. For me it was a question

of an interest, one that could just as equally have been Art, Chemistry, Scuba-Diving or Bharatanatyam. This was similarly true for my only woman colleague and fellow classmate.

So we came — eager eyed, excited, slightly nervous, but tremendously charged with the aim of starting out on what promised to be (in the great tradition of folk like James Herriot and Gerald Durrell) a challenging and meaningful voyage of learning and discovery. Difficult at times, diverse in nature, all this we expected of our experience. We had not however, reckoned with the other major problems and pressures that we were about to be faced with.

## Minority of Two

The first shock was getting used to being a minority of just two girls in a class of 75 male students. Boys straight out of school, most of whom had never imagined having members of the opposite sex working with them shoulder to shoulder for the next four years. A surprise for them, but nothing when compared to the ordeal of each morning's trip to class for both of us, for whom it resembled more a brave venture into unknown territory. We only had each other to turn to for comfort or solace as we grimly bore the cat calls, whistles, flying chalkpieces and occasional jeers of our male classmates. The fact that we were both 'city chick's from Delhi, only served to strengthen their conviction that we were not really serious or sincere in our desire to study veterinary science.

## Discrimination By Lecturers

The actual classroom experience was no less trying. Lecturers would refrain from calling out our roll numbers when they checked attendance. By doing so perhaps they intended to spare us the unwanted comments of male classmates, yet the practice only succeeded in singling us out and accentuating our 'difference'. Furthermore

it was hardly an act of chivalry to ignore our very presence in a classroom. This peculiar habit became apparent in other instances throughout the school year — our existence was glossed over by teachers who invariably referred to the class as "you boys" or forgot completely that the English language has feminine pronouns too, as every student was referred to as a "he". We as women were hardly considered important enough to have an identity of our own. We sat and squirmed in angry silence unable to speak out.

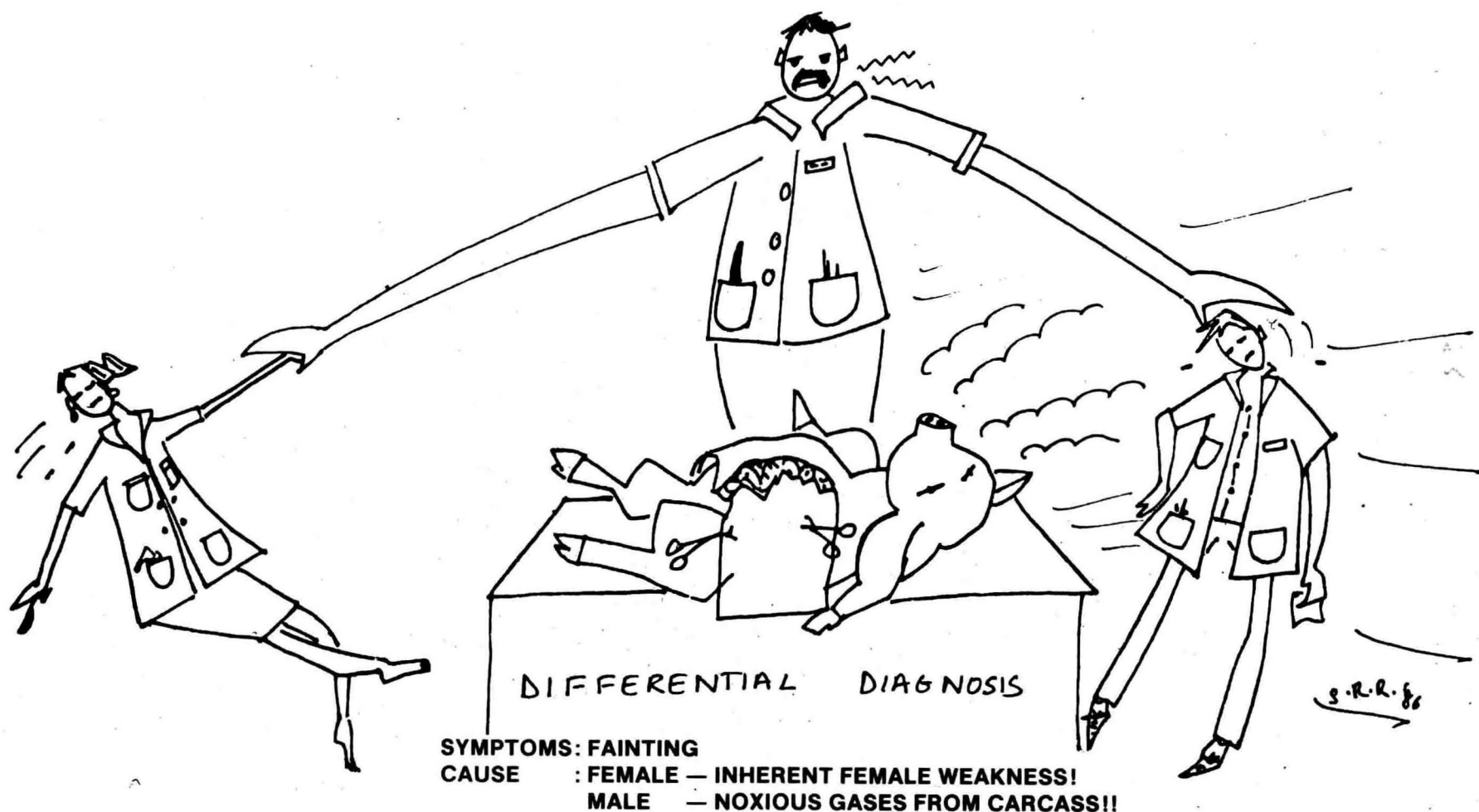
In any case speak out to whom? The whole environment was male dominated, who were we going to find to listen to us? Would anyone understand how we felt? We were also afraid that we would be accused of over-reacting, after all hadn't we been told, "Boys will be boys"? We could only hope that with patience and determination our fellow classmates and our teachers would get over the novelty of having women in class. "This too will pass" we said to ourselves hopefully, as we continued our voyage into the unknown.

## Our Worst Suspicions

However, as time passed nothing changed. It began to slowly dawn on us that we were not dealing just with 'youthful exuberance' or unfamiliarity in dealing with a new situation. No, it seemed there was more to it than that. Could it be that there was a general 'male' attitude towards women that transcended age and class? It was beginning to appear suspiciously like that to us. It was an attitude that seemed to relegate women to research and teaching within the profession of veterinary medicine, while it more generally implied that the female gender of the human species would be best suited to the pursuits of home, husband and family.







Our worst suspicions were given a chance to grow and become convictions as each new day presented us with evidence of this type of bigotry. The peculiar behaviour of lecturers whose attempts at classroom humour were always at our expense — it was always female stupidity, weakness, wickedness, viciousness and inferiority that were focal points of their humour. In a lecture on anthropods, for example, the teacher illustrated his subject saying, "all females, including those of the human species are primarily blood sucking, irritating creatures". In another class the professor while discussing the reproduction cycle of animals referred to the "nymphomaniac tendencies of the female during her menstrual cycle that resemble that of a bitch (female of the canine species) in heat." Similar instances include a comparison of the male turkey to old women because "both have hair on their breasts" and an exhortation to the male students of the class to compare the 'vigour' of certain animals to that displayed by the females in the class. This latter statement was made in a class where neither of the two women students were present and was further compounded by the fact that the professor requested the 'boys' not to mention the incident to their missing classmates. And what of the time when during a discussion on the sexual activity of animals the lecturer derived, or seemed to derive, immense pleasure from detailed and graphic descriptions of the human male's activity. "Come to me when you need to discuss contraception — the time will surely come . . ." and other equally unnecessary and unprintable comments.

Still we held out, hoping that at least by excelling in our work we would achieve equality of a kind. "This too will pass" we assured our-

selves, but when our professional capabilities were consistently doubted, the last myth exploded. The average male classmate (and professors too) basically believed that

a) girls were not built to do 'such work', be it at the theoretical level, or, more important, at the practical level — which according to them, required 'brute force and strength. They were firmly of the view that girls did little else than 'fool around' at the clinics, and in any case did not have the strength to restrain animals, inject them, examine them, to perform operations, to prepare an artificial vagina.

b) that the higher grades achieved by girls were due either to the partiality of teachers towards girls, or because of sheer fluke.

Field work, especially with large animals was considered to be an impossible dream for us girls. "You cannot do it", we were told; it is physically taxing, you had better stick to the smaller animals or to the laboratories and teaching.

While comments from fellow male students became common enough, some teachers too were brazenly open about their views — saying proudly, "To date no girl has got an 'A' in my course — it is impossible for a girl, why do they join this profession in the first place?"

#### A Process of Learning

No one ever asked the important question — what has been our experience as veterinary students?

The answer, very simply is that for each one of us, boy or girl, it has been a process of learning something new. At times we did a task on the first attempt as did others. At other times it took days, maybe weeks of practice before we were able to independently execute a particular activity.

The reality of course is that

whether boy or girl, either sex requires 10-20 helpers to restrain a stubborn buffalo! Today our profession has gone far beyond a question of mere 'manpower' or 'brute force'. Gentleness, dexterity and clear thinking in addition to sound factual information are the most important 'qualifications' for a good 'vet' regardless of sex.

This is not meant as an attack on the 'male sex' per se, nor is it intended to be a glorification of the struggling, oppressed woman. Of course there are many of my own sex, including veterinary students, who, by their behaviour, over years of conditioning, reinforce the image of the traditionally weak, vacillating, helpless and dumb woman.

It is a protest against that attitude which doubts the capacity of women to become the professional equals of men.

It is a plea that students — be they girls or boys — be treated and respected as human beings

with all the strengths and weaknesses; and to be given the due respect for their skills and abilities on equal terms.

Girls do not want preferential treatment or inflation of their grades. But certainly they do not want to be made to feel in some way less of a woman by the mere fact of wanting to pursue a career seriously. Similarly let not boys be made to feel less of a 'man' because of an initial queasiness while making the first incision! It is for a combination of all these reasons that few girls have ventured out independently as working vets in rural areas, and judgements as to their ability or lack of it can only be made after some have been encouraged to take up the challenge.

#### On the Threshold

Equality alas continues to remain yet another word in the constitution and the law. Traditional values and views of woman's role and status continue to

be deep rooted even among the academic and scientific community. It is only the presence of women steadily infiltrating and working in the so-called 'male' professions that is slowly challenging and questioning these long established beliefs. The presence and interaction of many male teachers and students who have treated us with respect and consideration is an indication of slowly changing attitudes. They have helped above all in sustaining a spirit of optimism and determination to come out on top.

Now on the threshold of saying goodbye to my student days and entering the profession as a responsible future 'healer' I can say in retrospect that "It has been worth it"! We have been toughened through the pain of having many of my illusions pulled from under my feet. But it was for the best and perhaps the only way in which to face myself and the realities squarely. This too will pass . . .





## The Charge Is Sedition!

As our front page headline highlights, the authorities in Delhi and the State capitals, are misusing the serious charge of sedition. They are also misusing the Anti-Terrorist Act. As a result, the charge of sedition, and even terrorism, has been turned into a cruel joke. At least this is the general impression, judging from the manner in which such grave charges are being levelled at anybody the government picks at will.

These days the citizens of this country are expected to believe that sedition does not necessarily amount to activities which are not in the national interest. Instead, it adds up to activities which are not in the interest of those in power. What is even more dangerous is that the inter-face between sedition and dissent, even terrorism and dissent, is being increasingly corroded. This is being done by those in power for whom democratic traditions and institutions have become an inconvenient and dispensable burden.

A few examples should serve to illustrate the point. About four years ago the Tamilnadu Government heaped a sedition charge on one of the country's leading Bharata Natyam dancers. Her 'guilt' was that she was a critic of the State government's poor human rights record. Fortunately an alert judge of the Madras High Court saw through the game. He pulled up the police for harassing the artiste and ultimately the authorities had to withdraw the charge unconditionally.

There is also the example of the NTR Telugu Desam government in Andhra Pradesh. Here was a chief minister who sought the help of the civil liberties movement when the Centre misused its power to hurl him out of office. But back in the seat of power, the same chief minister, has more or less launched a 'war' against civil liberties activists in the State. In Andhra Pradesh the law enforcement agencies seem to have been given a license to go even beyond charging political dissenters with sedition or terrorism. As in the case of Dr. Ramanadham, it would appear that political dissenters can simply be shot dead. (See The Forum Gazette 16-30 Sept. '86).

There is also the example of Sant Longowal. First the Government of India detained and charged him with sedition. Then, a little later, the P.M. described him as a martyr, a great leader of Punjab, a great Indian. Going by the 'logic' of the government's own ways, one would want to be pardoned for the thought whether the P.M. himself was not guilty of sedition for praising somebody who was supposedly seditious. Especially since Sant Longowal was not known to have changed any of his religious or political views.

The latest instances of the charge of sedition against Harji Malik and the 'Economic and Political Weekly', and the arrest of Shahid Siddiqui, editor of 'Nai Duniya', under the Anti-Terrorist Act, belie the government's proclaimed intention to usher in an era of political accord and reconciliation. Instead of fostering goodwill, the government is busy further tarnishing its own dismal image as regards respect for the citizens' constitutional rights are concerned. Instead of taking action against those who are known to have actively indulged in communal propaganda and aided and abetted violence, the authorities are misusing the power at their command by taking action against those with an unblemished record for secular and democratic values.

The charge is sedition! But it is not at all clear what is sedition and who is being really seditious.

"He who hath the pride of  
power, let him try and see  
O Nanak, before the Lord, there  
is no low or high degree"

Jupji

# Journalism of a

Patwant Singh



There is one kind of journalism which directs the affairs of nations. It makes and unmakes cabinets. It upsets governments, builds up navies and does many other great things. It is magnificent.

George Newnes of the British weekly, *Tit-Bits*, then described 'another kind of journalism which has no great ambitions. It is content to plod on, year after year, giving wholesome and harmless entertainment to crowds of hard-working people craving for a little fun and amusement. It is quite humble and unpretentious.'

There is a third kind of journalism in which India excels. Its flag-bearers are some of the writers in its national dailies. To them goes the credit for opening the door on wholly new possibilities for organising public opinion on the future form and substance of India.

The creed of this kind of journalism is founded in the firm belief that India is endangered by its minorities' search for dignity and identity, and not by the country's corrupt political culture. No threat is perceived through encouraging jingoism in the majority community (Hindus are 82.64 per cent of India's total population), but it is seen in every word and action of the Muslims (11.35 per cent), Christians (2.43 per cent), and Sikhs (1.96 per cent). Making the country safe from varied segments of its own people is viewed as the challenging new journalistic frontier in an India imperilled by its minorities!

The articles of faith on which the journalistic ideals of the third kind rest are of a different nature.

In India, the majority community's views must prevail with the Sikhs doing well by not insisting on Sikhism as a religion in its own right, the Muslims by accepting future Bhindranwallas, Moradabads and Ahmedabads as manifestations of a divine will, and the Christians by reconverting without fuss. The tiresome notion of India as an equal opportunity State for all Indians must be firmly rejected and no discussion permitted on the blueprint for this utopia; certainly not in the papers of the propagators of this ideal. To hasten the dawn of this new era, an occasional splash of vitriol in the heady cocktail of a resurgent and rampant India would be perfectly in order.

### Girilal Jain Vs the Sikhs

The man destined to inspire his readers with this vision of the promised land, to which — it must be said to his credit — others in his profession would also rally soon, was Girilal Jain, editor of *The Times of India*. His *bete noire*, the Sikhs, would unwittingly provide him with journalistic goals to which he would give himself over with messianic zeal.

Since no other situation in post-independence India can measure up to the seriousness

of the Punjab crisis with its potential for dismantling the very republic itself — a possibility even intelligent people are reluctant to face up to — this commentary is confined to some aspects of the press' coverage of Punjab during these fateful years. Because of the early lead Girilal Jain took in holding India's entire Sikh community answerable — if not responsible — for the Punjab events, it seems appropriate to start with him.

He considered preposterous any suggestion of Mrs. Gandhi's complicity in communalising Punjab's politics, whether with the aim of isolating the Akalis or mobilising the Hindu majority behind her. He found it 'inconceivable that she would avoid settling the Akali demands in order deliberately to polarise the situation in Punjab so that she could win over the Hindu vote in the whole of North India and beyond. This kind of column speaks more for those who indulge in it than for her.' ('The Sikhs are in Danger', *The Times of India*, March 7, 1984).

In less than three weeks of writing this, Jain shifted his stand: One can blame as many worthies have done, Mrs. Gandhi for the impasse in the government-Akali talks and urge her to concede the Akali demands. But apart from weakening the moral authority of the only leader who possibly possesses the stature and the stamina to cope with the problems arising out of the agitation, what would that approach achieve? ('Perils of Akali Extremism', *The Times of India*, March 27, 1984).

Considering he had found such talk 'inconceivable' a few days earlier, could this mean a shift towards a more balanced position? Not really, since he saw nothing odd in talking of moral authority in the same breath as he grudgingly conceded that Mrs. Gandhi could after all be blameworthy for the 'impasse'. Then comes this astonishing poser: what can be achieved by blaming her?

His editorial position on this critical issue was that even if the Prime Minister was found playing communal favouritism in India's existing explosive communal situation, what purpose would be served by blaming her? Jain saw no need to mention that 'the problems arising out of the agitation' in Punjab were of her own creation. It was Mrs. Gandhi, her son Sanjay Gandhi, and Giani Zail Singh

who had in the first place given the crisis an entirely different coloration by centre-staging Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, then drawn out the agitation to give him time to destabilise the Akali party and its leadership, while the Congress used the time to play on the sentiments of the majority community and mobilise it for the next elections.

Clearly, Jain needs to be reminded that influential and independent editors are by definition required to expose the political intrigues which threaten the very fabric of society. They are expected to show objectivity, impartiality and even handedness in their comments on crucial national issues. Newspapers being an integral part of the nation's political process, they are not expected to connive with the misdeeds of those in power.

But, Jain took an even more unprincipled position on the riots against the Sikhs in Haryana in the summer of '83. While acknowledging that 'innocent Sikhs had been harassed, insulted, beaten up and in some cases murdered just because some of their fellow-religionists have committed similar crimes in the adjoining State', he went on to ask: 'what does one do in such a situation? Haul the Haryana government over the coals? Hold the Haryana Chief Minister, Mr. Bhajan Lal, guilty of having inspired or even organised the assaults on the Sikhs? One can certainly do that and salvage one's conscience. But what would that achieve?

Every word needs to be read carefully by impartial observers of our political scene, because the point made here is that even if Sikhs are harassed, insulted, beaten and in some cases murdered, 'what would it achieve' (his recurring refrain) by holding 'the Haryana Chief Minister, Mr Bhajan Lal guilty of having inspired or even organised the assaults on the Sikhs'?

### The Times of India Rewrites History

This shows the integrity with which this unfolding crisis was covered by India's foremost daily. It also underscores the extent to which the paper bent itself to influence its readers into accepting as everyday events the harassment and even the murder of Sikhs. Is it any wonder that they are enraged, or feel as they do about India and their future in it?

It was Jain's ethical, moral and professional responsibility, despite being from Haryana himself, to take a principled stand on the wanton violence in the State. He should have spelt out in utterly unambiguous terms the pivotal difference between the events in Haryana and Punjab: that while the riots in Haryana were organised by the State, under its umbrella, and within sight of the law enforcement agencies, not a single



# third kind-I

communal riot had taken place in Punjab till then. Nor uptil now. Neither was the State government guilty of instigating any, nor had Punjab's Sikh population ever rioted against the Hindus.

Jain's duty lay in calling on the Chief Minister to step down in the interest of accountability and propriety in public office, and in demanding an impartial inquiry into the events. Anyone in his position, placed in a similar situation in any country in which the role of the press is better understood, would have fought on the side of justice and decency because the nation's long-term interest required nothing less.

In the event, what were the long-term implications of his refusal to hold the Haryana government responsible for the riots against the Sikhs? The most serious could be the encouragement this gave to those who in time prepared the blue-print for similar riots in the first four days of November, 1984, in Delhi and other Congress-ruled States. It would be well to reflect on this.

At no time in the two and a half years since, has *The Times of India* under Jain's editorship relented in its offensive against the Sikhs. It has pilloried the Punjab Accord, deplored the elections, lectured the Akali ministry on its obligations, lacked common decency in its comments on Sant Longowal even after his death, and in the existing atmosphere of doubt given a new edge to the increasing bitterness with which a section of the Hindus view the Sikhs. All Sikhs, thanks to it.

Not content with ripping the present social fabric apart, Jain in his obsession has reached back to pervert historical truths as well. 'The Akalis, let us face it, were not an independent Sikh component of the larger freedom movement ... (they) of course had their problems with the British but these, related to their view of Sikh interests, these had nothing to do with India's independence.' ('What Ails the Sikhs Community', *The Times of India*, August 11, 1986).

Fortunately, this particular attempt at rewriting history was questioned by Rajinder Puri in his regular column in *The Sunday Observer*: 'Last week Girilal Jain wrote one of his characteristic convoluted articles on Punjab in *The Times of India*, the main thrust of which was too esoteric to grasp for simple uninitiated minds like mine. What did catch attention in that article however was Jain's charge that the Akalis had always collaborated with the British during India's freedom struggle. Ah! clearly then, the lack of patriotism among the Sikhs is the root cause of our present travails in Punjab. I don't quite know in what manner the Akalis collaborated with the British during India's freedom struggle except by providing 30,000 volunteers whom the British arrested

and 400 of whom were shot. Undeniably, the number of such collaborations ran into thousands. Many, many more Akalis were shot dead by the British than were Congressmen. But there, the dissertation of history had best be left to Girilal Jain himself who, one is sure, will regale us with more nuggets of knowledge about the finer shades of patriotism once his exertions over the sale and purchase of Reliance shares subside.' (August 23, 1986).

## Press Blinkers On Sikh Situation

Earlier, writing in *The Forum Gazette*, Gilbert Lobo from Bombay offered these figures which should help sift truth from fiction: 'Sikhs have rela-



A journal which has not succumbed to the communal ethos.

tively shed more blood for India than any other community. Out of 2125 martyrs for freedom, 1557 or 75 per cent were Sikhs. Out of 2646 sent to Andamans for life sentence, 2147 or 80 per cent were Sikhs ... in Subhas Bose's army of 20,000, 12,000 were Sikhs and Sikhs are just 2 per cent of the total population.' (July 1-15, 1986).

Unlike Puri, Vinod Mehta, the editor of *The Sunday Observer*, finds it difficult to distinguish between a community as a whole with its traditions of valour and decency, and a few on its fringes. He has a tendency, like several of his counterparts, to put the entire Sikh community on notice each time an incident takes place. No pressing need for distinction is felt. 'The Hindu mood, and again I use the word with caution, is "vicious". Whether it is the bus conductor or the office peon or the retired Army officer in Defence Colony or the industrialist in the Golf Links, there is no "goodwill" left for Sikhs in Punjab or the Barnala government. Meanwhile, Delhi's Sardaris are seen to be shift, devious and in league with the terrorists' (August 10, 1986).

There was more of the same, some of it in very dubious taste. Mehta did in a subsequent article attempt to clarify that he was merely expressing the views of the others, and had thus qualified his statements with 'are seen', 'one hears', or remarks attributed to an anonymous man in an airbus....

Well, this may have once served as a perfectly sensible

stratagem for making the occasional point, but to make unsavoury statements and attribute them to faceless persons, isn't quite the done thing now. In any event it goes to Mehta's credit that his paper, unlike some major dailies, does allow other points of view to be published. But even if contradictions do occasionally appear — and seldom in the papers which make unfounded allegations — they cannot offset the effect of incessantly adverse propaganda on readers' minds.

If the national press had made a clear distinction between those who committed criminal acts and the Sikhs as a whole, the schism between the Hindus and Sikhs would not have been so great. But it is disinclined to make the distinction.

Even *India Today*, which is more balanced than most in its coverage of Punjab, made an amazing suggestion in a recent issue: 'In the illogical atmosphere of communal suspicion, some periodic demonstrative action by the Sikhs to reiterate their nationalism may be called for.' ('Sikhs Outside Punjab', September 15, 1986). Why? Aside from being an offensive and wholly untenable proposition, the suggestion that 14 million people should reiterate their nationalism betrays an impotence of reason. Have all Hindus ever been asked to reiterate their nationalism for crimes committed by a few? Or is it only the Muslims, Sikhs and Christians who are required to reaffirm it?

This constant invocation can prove cataclysmic once the feeling of discrimination takes root: once these communities are convinced that in the eyes of mobs, rampaging at the behest of criminals parading as politicians, their inalienable rights as citizens are worthless. After their final alienation will come a prolonged period of violent upheavals which could in turn lead to national disintegration. This has happened time and again in the past, over thousands of years, due to our boundless capacity to learn nothing from experience. And if internal divisions are encouraged, or provoked, in the mistaken arrogance and belief that the majority is strong enough to contain them, the bell will once again toll for India.

## Hypocrisy of the Press

The unrepentant hypocrisy of the national press is evident in other ways. In misleading headlines, slanted stories, in the ghoulishness with which it reports the killing of Sikhs — innocent or otherwise, and its self-imposed censorship through which excesses against the Sikhs are rarely published. Quantitatively, innocent Sikhs are now being savaged in far greater numbers, by the system and some segments of society, than the toll criminal elements on the fringes of the Sikh community are taking of innocent Hindus and Sikhs. Yet the press would have the public believe that the Sikhs have made Punjab's rivers run with blood. To see if this is true, let's look at some statistics which were provided in Parliament on August 13, 1986, in reply to a written question (No. 4020).

In the first four months of

this year, 2066 murders, 855 dacoities, 2565 robberies and 414 rape cases were committed in U.P. Then came Madhya Pradesh (1104 murders), Bihar (759), Maharashtra (701), and so on. The figures for other crimes are equally grim, as also for the other States. The figures for Punjab are self-explanatory: 221 murders, 8 dacoities, 61 robberies and 15 rape cases! For those predisposed to fudging issues through talk of population ratios and so on, it is best to point out right now that it is quite easy to arrive at figures proportionate to population. The contrast even then is rather startling.

What is intriguing is that of the five dailies perused for this purpose, only *The Indian Express* carried this report (September 2, 1986), and the man under whose byline it appeared is a Sikh! Could it be that the figures for Punjab not being too grim the others found the report unworthy of publication even though the country's current crime situation is a perfectly newsworthy item.

What is it that does get maximum exposure? On a random picking, take *The Statesman*, *The Indian Express*, and *The Times of India* of August 24, 1986. The first had a news item under the heading, 'Terrorists kill one in Punjab', which ran all the way across three columns. The second featured the same news in two columns under the heading, 'Terrorists gun down one in Punjab'. The third also used two columns with the heading, 'One shot dead in Punjab'.

Granted there must be an absolutely pressing editorial reason for including this news item, but could not a single column have sufficed? Or is it that by reporting even one killing in thick bold types across several columns the papers wanted to ensure that their readers were kept reminded of what the Sikhs are up to in Punjab? For apologists of the status quo, who find it difficult to accept points of view contrary to their own, and who are given to dreary arguments about

occasional headlines proving nothing, and so on, there are countless other equally provocative headings, which can be shown. Even more provocative are the implications of the word 'terrorist'.

This word has acquired dangerous overtones in India. If the police and para-military personnel say the men killed by them were 'terrorists', chances are that no questions — either at the administrative or political levels — will be asked. They are likely to be lauded instead. As for public opinion, in principal it should count. In a democracy the authorities are accountable for exceeding their brief. This is what Parliament and the press are about. Not so in India.

In Parliament, the overwhelming majority of the ruling party ensures government support for its actions even when it is patently in the wrong. The press, on the other hand, makes sure that the words terrorist and Sikhs are synonymous in the public mind, so that people are not very interested in knowing if the Sikhs killed in 'encounters' are in fact terrorists. Or innocents killed to increase the head count. In fairness to them, many people are interested in the truth, there are honourable exceptions, like civil liberties organisations and those whose sense of personal ethic prevents them from sinking into the morass of communal prejudice. But generally, concern at the miscarriage of justice against the Sikhs, is not being shown to the extent it should be. The inference drawn in the current climate which the media has helped create is that if Sikhs are killed they must be terrorists.

It is important for thoughtful people to understand the pernicious role some of the national papers have played in creating these attitudes. And the extent to which Sikh anger has been fuelled at the manner in which the entire community has been damned by the fraudulent coverage of the Punjab crisis.

\*Courtesy SEMINAR

(To be continued)

## This is Tihar!

I went to meet Shahid Siddiqui, editor of 'Nai Duniya', now under arrest in Tihar jail. It was shocking to see the humiliating conditions created by the jail authorities. There is a strong barrier artificially set up to keep wide gap between the prisoner and his visitors. It comprises roof-to-floor iron bars attached with thick strong wire gauze on both sides with a gap of two feet in between. The prisoners have to stand behind one such structure and his friends or relatives on the other side of another structure.

There are always a number of visitors between 3 and 5 pm, supposed to be the time for "mulaqat" (meeting). The verandah selected for this purpose is small and narrow. The prisoners from one side and the visitors from the other have to shout at each other and get back with hoarse throats because of separate bars and gauze walls on both the sides.

There is only one square hole in the middle of the bars on both sides through which clothes or eatables have to be thrust and passed on. It is said that this absurd arrangement was made for security reasons after the escape of Charles Sobhraj. (Every one knows that he escaped with the connivance of jail authorities). But why subject all others to such a



tormenting and insulting situation?

I spent three-and-a-half years in jail during the freedom struggle in Lahore Central jail and another period during the emergency. Nothing of this kind was experienced then. Hardened criminals were required to meet their family members with only one fencing in between. Even they could communicate with each other conveniently.

Let the jail authorities resort to the original practice of face to face meetings in jail. I strongly protest against the inhuman and undignified conditions in Tihar jail and demand civilised behaviour on the part of the authorities.

Inder Mohan  
New Delhi



# Implications of Arun Shourie

Balraj Puri

**T**hat the writings of Arun Shourie, which are marked by unusual erudition, earnestness and zeal and which get the most favoured treatment in the media, are not known to have had a soothing effect on the communal situation is an eloquent, though, sad commentary on the present state of affairs in the country and should also be a matter of concern to the celebrated writer. He merely succeeds in providing arguments to reinforce existing prejudices. His logic is ruthless and provocative but it lacks understanding and empathy, without which one cannot persuade, convert and win.

Moreover, the issues he is highlighting are least relevant to the contemporary situation. The theological polemics between religions and the rationalist arguments against them raged over a century ago in the West which Arun Shourie is reintroducing in the current communal debate.

**There is not a single doctrinal or theological issue which is a source of controversy, not to speak of tension or communal violence in India. In the century old history of muslim separatism, from Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Iqbal to Jinnah, no such issue became a dividing point with Hindus. In fact religious sanction and theological arguments were used by the pro-Congress Muslims to build a case for a composite Indian nationalism.**



Arun Shourie

The dispute at that time, as it is today, was over various secular demands of the community vis-a-vis share in services and power and over the degree of autonomy of a religious community within the purview of Indian nationalism.

## Hindus Hardly Outraged

Hindus have hardly been outraged over the irrationalities and contradictions of the Quran or the Bible; at any rate till Arun Shourie started exposing them. Nor is their distrust of other communities inspired by their own scriptures.

Again, Sikh fanaticism is not

an outcome of "total and unreasoning obedience" — Shourie's phrase of the Sikh youth to the commandments of Nanak or Guru Granth Sahib. Nor are Hindu misgivings about the Sikhs motivated by either their scriptures or lack of respect for the Sikh gurus and their book.

**If we look into the major communal disputes of the century, most of them can be traced to communal and not religious causes.** Take the most explosive current controversies. Ayyodia is a dispute over a piece of land. Ahmedabd was the issue of Rathyatra. Personal law was a question of unifor-

mity versus separate identity. In Punjab political power, Chandigarh, river waters, etc., are the main disputes. Where does the question of "infallibility of scriptures" come in? Yet this question which occupies a central place in Shourie's analysis of communalism?

## Fanaticism and Community Identity

It can be argued that an attitude of infallibility towards religious scriptures undermines mutual tolerance. But fanaticism is more proportional to one's attachment to a community, its identity and interests than commitment to religious dogmas. Gandhi and Azad had far greater faith in their respective religious books than Jinnah and Savarkar had. A threat to the identity and self-respect of a community-real or imaginary-spurs its members to far greater desperate acts than orthodox, obscurantist and irrational religious doctrines do.

What outraged Hindus to kill 3000 Sikhs within a day or so in Delhi in 1984? Not any doctrinal inhibition or theological controversy. It was a mad reaction against the threat perceived from another community.

**I am not seeking mercy for religion from Arun Shourie's onslaught. But I am unwilling to agree that it is an onslaught on communalism. I am rather afraid he is making a substantial contribution to the cause of communalism. He is making Hindus more self-righteous than any body else is known to be doing by certifying that they have accepted "the humanist secular attitude towards the text" which others have not done. The contempt and ridicule with which he has treated the texts of other communities thus influences Hindu attitudes towards them.**

I would not like to dwell here on the issue of whether the Hindu religious attitude is more rational than that of other communities. My basic contention is that the issue has no direct relevance to the problem of communalism. Self righteousness of the majority at a religious plane and claims of identity by the minorities at a communal plane would foreclose the scope for dialogue between them.

Thus, far from promoting an inter-religious or rationalism-religion debate, the logic of Shourie leads to widening the gulf between religious and communities.

His own understanding of Islam and Christianity seems "bookish". He does not take into account the process of evolution and continuous reinterpretation of the texts which most religious of the world have gone through since they were revealed and the set of beliefs and practices which they have acquired in that process.

## Reason, Religion and Science

If the objective is not to debunk and demolish a religion but to reform it, one could pick

up the rationalist-secular-human strands in it and develop it further. As far as Islam is concerned, the most radical experiment in the reconstruction of its religions thought, to meet the demands of science and reason has, for instance, been attempted by Iqbal. In fact, he argues that "in view of its functions, religion stands in greater need of a rational foundation of its ultimate principles than even the dogmas of science."

Of course it is the same Iqbal who was the author of Pakistan and who along with Jinnah had a far greater pull on Muslim mind than the entire tribe of Ulama with a "total obedience to the texts".

It is obvious that Shourie's knowledge of Islam and the Muslim mind is far too inadequate. To the extent he is typical of the Hindu attitude for not much seems to have been learnt from the pre-partition Hindu-Muslim politics.

Similarly, it is rather presumptuous on the part of the learned author to sermon Christians about taking their books too literally and as infallible. For the entire Christian world has accepted Darwin and other scientists even though they are not consistent with the theories of Bible. Is Shourie really unaware of Reformation Renaissance and Humanist movements that swept the Christendom while glorifying the abortive Indian renaissance towards the close of the nineteenth century?

## Implications of Arrogant Nationalism

Shourie has made it clear in many of his writings that his concern is not merely religious reform but promotion of communal peace and national unity. If the minorities suspect that religious conformism is the price demanded of them for seeking security in India, the suspicion would not be entirely unfounded. Needless to add that the cause of religious reform will be an inevitable casualty if it is backed by a perceived threat.

The implications of nationalism becoming so arrogant as to demand changes in the religious beliefs of a section of the nation are no less ominous. And if the current exercises, of which Shourie is a vital part, of mobilising Hindus in the name of nationalism, science and modernisation at the cost of compassion, empathy and dissent, do succeed, it would be unmitigated tragedy for a great civilisation.

Already the debate on the issues raised above has become unequal. Not only in terms of the growingly inhospitable columns of the newspapers and magazines for dissenting ideas, but overall conformist trends in the country, faithfully reflected in and promoted by the media.

**Balraj Puri wrote this piece as a rejoinder to Arun Shourie's 3-part articles on Communalism which recently appeared in the Illustrated Weekly of India.**

## Press Council Summons ...

Continued from page 1 col 5

"scores" of the analysis which showed that the *Times of India* had a total communal/inflammatory content of 24.8 per cent, or 179 words out of 721 as compared with a range of 0 to 4 per cent for the *Statesman*, *Patriot*, *Financial Express*, *Indian Express* and *Hindustan Times*.

Counsel for the *Times*, Dr L.M. Singhvi, argued that the editor Mr Girilal Jain was "holding a mirror to Indian society" through his writings. And that he was only making a frank appraisal of the psychology of a mob. He claimed that Mr Jain was making an appeal to the Prime Minister and the police and administration to restore order and only asserting that the retribution would not have taken place if the Sikhs had condemned the assassination.

The Committee, after some discussion, allowed the Counsel for the students to produce "expert witnesses" at the next hearing, clarifying however that their testimonies would not be binding on the Council according to the rules. Dr Singhvi had raised an objection to the producing of the witnesses under the law of Evidence, but Haksar countered this with the argument that the opinion of experts is relevant if the Court has to form an opinion where science is concerned. Linguistics, she pointed out, is a science. While

interpretation of a document is the job of the court, experts can establish facts. They do not interpret.

## Guidelines against communal writing

Press Council guidelines lay down clearly what communal writing is. It is an offense to carry out "Scurrilous and untrue attacks on communities, or individuals ... by charges attributing misconduct to them as due to their being members of a particular community or caste". Similarly it is an offense to foster "feelings of distrust between communities", or to exaggerate news with "banner headlines or in distinctive type". Another offense is to make "disrespectful, derogatory or insulting remarks on or reference to the different religions or faiths or their founders".

## Complaints by Sikh Forum

Recently the Press Council has had to take up several cases of complaints on communal writing, some of them brought up by the Sikh Forum.

The *Forum* had brought to the notice of the Press Council that four newspapers, the *Navbharat Times*, *Sandhya Times*, *Jansatta* and *Punjab Kesri* reported a news item in November last year that "three Sikhs had beaten a jeweller to death". The *Forum* protested that the

name of the community should not have been mentioned in such a case of brawl.

While initiating the discussion, the Chairman of the Council, Justice A.N. Sen, said that it was not necessary to report the name of the community in case of accident or other criminal happenings as it tended to single out a community for certain streaks of character.

The Secretary of the *Sikh Forum* clarified that the reporting of the incident was only notional, but indicated a trend in news reporting against journalistic ethics detrimental to the Sikhs. When Shri Prabhaskar Joshi, Editor *Jansatta*, Shri Vishnu Khare of *Navbharat Times* and the *Punjab Kesri* representative stated that they had just reported the news as given in the FIR, the *Forum* secretary interjected to point out that the English counterparts of these Hindi papers had reported the same news without referring to the community of any of the involved persons.

The Chairman saw the logic of the complaint and stated that every body agreed not to refer to the community of persons involved, while reporting news, especially in the case of accidents, or even in terrorist or separatist activities. The representatives of the concerned newspapers concurred with these views, and expressed regrets.



## Patterns of Communalism

Continued from page 5

Bangush and Tarai Behram Khan, all in the Jama Masjid area.

By that time it was 8.30 p.m. Somehow all the street lights went off. There was a rampage, and of the first time, in one of the mixed localities in the streets of the area, a few shops run by Hindus were burnt or looted. This happened in one of the Muslim majority streets. (On the 26th July the violence had taken place in a Hindu majority area in Bazar Sita Ram).

While the shops were being looted and burned, the police intervened, and a Muslim youth was killed in the melee. All this has tarnished the golden tradition of the walled city of Old Delhi where local Hindus and Muslims have lived together in complete harmony, irrespective of who is in a majority or in a minority in a particular street, lane or by-lane. Fortunately there is a silver lining in this dark situation, for local Muslims came to the rescue of Hindu shopkeepers and did their best to ward off the attack. Local Hindus and Muslims of this part of Old Delhi believe that in both July and September, the mob was led by anti-social elements from outside the area. They maintain that such an outrage was possible only because of rival Senas.

In this context some facts regarding the Naib Imam and

his father are relevant. The Shahi Imam has played the role of an opposition leader vis a vis Congress (I) and was known to be close to H. N. Bahuguna and the late Babu Jagjivan Ram. But he was also easily influenced by Indira Gandhi and her younger son, Sanjay, just before the 1980 elections. Both mother and son personally went to the Jama Masjid to meet the Shahi Imam two months before those elections, and after an hour's meeting, were successful in winning him over to their side.

Subsequently the Shahi Imam tried to explain his somersault. He maintained that both Indira Gandhi and Sanjay had apologised to him for the Emergency excesses on the Muslim community. He convinced no one however, Ahmed Bukhari, the Naib Imam for his part has been an ardent supporter of Congress (I) although he lends his ear to Javed Habib for general advice.

To return to the Senas, Hindu or Muslim. They have undoubtedly been organised to meet the present day ominous requirements of political parties. Keen observers of political developments recognise that communal riots and tensions have been deliberately made part and parcel of electoral politics. The vicious cycle of rampant corruption, resultant crimes and incited riots and carnage basically serve the purpose of dis-



Ominous Growth of Senas

rupting the unity of the people's action for their fundamental rights. Politicians in power, or seeking it, feel secure when

they can keep the people divided, for which they use any means. What these power hungry politicians fail to realise is

that the people cannot be kept fooled at all times. Ultimately they see through these sordid games.

# "MILKFED"

PRODUCERS OF

## "VERKA" & "AMBER"

Delicious and Nutritious  
DAIRY Products

- \* PURE DESI GHEE
- \* TABLE BUTTER
- \* SKIMMED MILK POWDER
- \* WHOLE MILK POWDER
- \* BABY FOOD
- \* INFANT MILK FOOD
- \* PROCESSED CHEESE
- \* KAJU PINNI
- \* PANEER
- \* ICE CREAM POWDER

- \* HIGH FAT MILK
- \* STANDARDISED MILK
- \* TONNED MILK
- \* SWEETENED FLAVOURED MILK
- \* LASSI
- \* ICE CREAM
- \* MILK CAKE
- \* PEDA
- \* YOGHURT
- \* CHEESE SINGLES

IN CONSUMER AND BULK PACKING

The Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited,  
S.C.O. 3015-16, Sector 22-D, CHANDIGARH.



# GURU NANAK AND HIS MISSION

By Satindra Singh

Nanak's home state Punjab had for centuries been overrun by foreign invaders. The invaders came and went, the most persistent being Mahmud of Ghazni.

Mahmud did not want to establish himself on the throne of Delhi; his chief motive was to plunder as though to pave the way for other adventurers. Soon the Afghans, under the leadership of the Shihad-ud-Din Ghauri, occupied the Indian capital. With that began the Muslim rule of the sub-continent that would last nearly six centuries. Such was the turbulent political backdrop to Nanak's life and times.

After the Afghans came the Slave, Lodhi and Mughal dynasties, in that order. There were three responses from the Hindus to the massive Muslim onslaught on their polity, self-respect and religion. One, sporadic resistance; two, total withdrawal into the ivory tower of *karma* and unassailability of life beyond, and, lastly, attempts at building 'bridges of amity', roughly an earlier version of the contemporary talk of peaceful co-existence. The Hindu saints of the *Bhakti* movement had their counterparts in the *Sufis* on the Muslim side.

Retreat into lofty exclusiveness did not help the Hindus much. "Caste despises caste. The Brahmin condemns the cultivator. The cultivator resents the attitude of the Brahmin; both despise the menial. There was no trace of nationalism in this, though the rituals helped the Hindus to 'live like lotus above the mire.'"

The course adopted by the *Bhaktas* and the *Sufis* mollified both sides to some extent. Ramanand, Kabir, Chaitanya on the one hand, and the Chishtis—Farid Shakarganj, Moynuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Aulia—on the other, did much to establish a common ground between the two antagonists. The *Bhaktas* and the *Sufis* failed however to cut much ice, except in their immediate neighbourhoods and for only a fleeting period in India's history. In course of time, both the *Bhakti* and the *Sufi* movements disappeared from the Indian scene leaving behind only a fragrant memory mainly for the benefit of *kirtan* singers and *qawwals* of today.

## Nanak is Born

Guru Nanak was born in the midst of all this in 1469 in the twilight of the Lodhis. His father, Kalu Mehta, was a petty village revenue official. Guru Nanak's birthplace was Talwandi, later renamed Nanakana Sahib, now in Pakistan.

From his childhood, Nanak was prone to 'other worldliness', as his family elders put it. In spite of their best efforts, he did not take to any 'respectable' or 'acceptable' calling to earn his livelihood. Even as a child, he preferred Hindu and Muslim scriptures to prescribed text-



books and was more interested in the discourses of holy men than in the 'dry-as-dust lessons' given by *pandits* and *maulvis*. The precocious child frustrated all attempts by his parents to mould him into the 'normal' life of a house-holder.

## Declares His Mission

As a last resort his parents decided to get Nanak married to bring home to him the responsibilities of a house-holder. For a time, he devoted himself to his wife. She bore him two sons. But then the search for truth became so imperative that he abandoned his home and family and became a mendicant. He fasted, prayed, meditated and visited both Hindu and Muslim sacred places. He held discourses with holy men of both religions at Kurukshetra, Harwar, Mecca and Baghdad. Finally in August 1507, he declared his mission after disappearing for three days and nights from his house in Sultanpur Lodhi, in Kapurthala district in Punjab. He proclaimed:

Neither Hindu nor Muslim  
am I;  
We are God's children all.

Nanak elucidated this concept further when sometime later he wrote:

I have broken with the Hindu  
and the Muslim,  
I will not worship as the  
Hindu, alter nor like the  
Muslim go to Mecca.  
I shall serve Him and none  
else.

I will not pray to the idols, nor  
say the Muslim prayer.  
I shall put my heart at the feet  
of the one Supreme Being.  
For we are neither Hindus  
nor Musalmaans.

This defiant declaration again-

st Islam and an open break with Hinduism is the quintessence of Nanak's philosophy, namely, the brotherhood of man. But even this simple proposition brought Nanak up against formidable difficulties, among the greatest being the belief of the Hindus in a plethora of gods, the law of *karma*, the caste system, and renunciation of the world. On the other hand, the Muslim conviction that they were instruments of the will of God militated against what Nanak stood for. The brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God could not easily be reconciled with either orthodox Hinduism or fanatical Islam.

Unlike most Hindu saints, Nanak stood for uncompromising monotheism. Here are the opening lines of the *Japji*, the Sikh morning prayer:

There is one God.  
He is the supreme truth.  
He, the creator,  
Is without fear and without  
hate.  
He, the omnipresent,  
Pervades the universe.  
He is not born.  
Nor does He die to be born  
again.  
Before time itself,  
There was truth,  
When time began to run its  
course,  
He was the truth.  
Even now, He is the truth.  
Evermore shall truth prevail.

For Nanak there was no religion except the religion of universal piety and brotherhood; there was no caste except indivisibility informed with humanity. He equated untouchability with immorality and impiety. 'False is caste because God is the refuge of all creatures'. He also advised his followers to

eschew *kam* (lust), *krodh* (angry), *lobh* (greed), *moh* (attachment) and *ahankar* (arrogance). The other cardinal principles of his religion are *sat* (truth), *seva* (selfless service), *sangat* (holy congregation), *sehaj* (equipoise), *santokh* (contentment), *nam* (prayer), *dan* (charity), *daya* (compassion), *dharam* (righteousness), *dhiraaj* (fortitude), *ishnan* (cleanliness of body and soul), *kirtan* (community singing) and *pangat* (community kitchen). Their continued practice was to help man achieve Grace and become *gurmukh* (godlike).

According to Nanak, man has to traverse three stages of life: duty (*sharam khand*), knowledge (*gian khand*) and righteous deeds (*karam khand*) to reach the sublime and blissful state of *sach khand* (grace).

Nanak repeatedly emphasised that righteous deed was the only way to attain Grace. He condemned renunciation of the world for 'saintly virtues' in this world and 'salvation' in the next. His advice was: *nam japo, kirt karo, vand chhako te ishan karo* (worship God, work with your own hands, share your wealth with others and keep your body and soul clean).

He addressed the Hindu priest:

O Pandit, let the name of God  
be thy purification,  
Let the Name be thy learning,  
wisdom and way of life,  
The sacred thread on the  
body means little  
Unless there is Divine Light  
within thee...  
Seek the Name and nothing  
else besides.

Nanak's concept of God is radically different from that of the Muslims as well. God, for him, is not a Superhuman Being sitting in judgement somewhere

in the high heavens. He is Truth. And only through righteous living can man have access to His Grace. He says in the *Japji*:

Not by thought alone  
Can He be known,  
Tho' one may think a hundred thousand times.  
Nor in solemn silence,  
Nor in deep meditation.  
Though fasting yields abundance of virtue,  
It cannot appease the hunger for truth.  
Not by anyone of these,  
Nor by a hundred thousand other devices,  
Can God be reached.  
How then shall truth be known?  
How the veil of false illusion torn?  
Let the righteous path be thine.  
O Nanak, thus runneth the divine.  
The righteous path let it be thine.

Nanak, moreover, did not believe, either that man was a mere tool in the hands of destiny, or that future was preordained. Islam peace, but it also meant the faith that there is only one God that Mohammed is His last prophet. This bred hatred, intolerance even war. Instead, Nanak ordained prayer for the good of entire humanity (*sarbat da bhal*).

Nanak, indeed, admonished the Muslim priest. If he wanted to be a true Muslim, Nanak advised him to 'make compassion his mosque, faith his prayer-mat, honest living his *Qur'an*, humility his circumcision and continence his fasting'.

## Theory of Karma

Those superficially acquainted with the philosophy of Nanak would be puzzled by the Guru's reference to the theory of *karma*. For instance:

Words do not saint nor sinner make,  
Action alone is written in the book fate.  
What we sow that alone we reap.  
O Nanak, be saved or for ever transmigrate.

Isn't this the concept of Hinduism too? Can't one suspect in this the seed of caste? No. Only a superficial student of Sikhism would think so.

Caste, under any form, under any pretext or interpretation, will always be alien to Sikhism and caste is, after all an offspring of the Hindu theory of *karma*, in the sense of fate preordained from above.

Scholastically, one could even maintain that it was Nanak's belief that man could achieve Divine Grace only by performing *karma*, in the sense of action, not as a pre-birth dispensation. To Nanak, 'Truth is higher than everything else; but higher than truth is virtuous living'. All references to *karma* in the writings of Nanak and his nine succes-

Continued on page 17





## Religion And The Sikh Elite

Harish K. Puri

The author teaches Political Science at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. In this short note he draws attention to a recent study, "Religion and Politics" by Dr. Gobinder Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala.

**R**eligion is generally conceived in terms of its ideals; what it ought to be. It is necessary that it is viewed as it presents itself to us in the world of experience. The meaning it acquires and the role which it comes to play is related to the historical context and the structure of social and



political relations. It is described as "the heart of a heartless world"; as an expression of real distress and also a protest against real distress. Its potential for political mobilisation is immense and, as Karl Marx found, it could, in certain circumstances, acquire the same kind of energy as of a material force. However, what shape it takes in terms of beliefs, values, attitudes and consciousness is a function of the dialectical dynamics of relationships between the ideas of the ruling interests and principles and belief system bequeathed to a community. Conflicting and competing social interests may, therefore, contend for appropriation of this 'force' through control and use of structures that apparently deal with matters of religion. A recent study "Religion and Politics" by Dr. Gobinder Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala, which deals with the

Continued from page 16

sors may, thus, be treated as no more than poetic allusions to conscious duty in the life on earth.

On the other hand, the Sikh gurus emphasised the concept of Grace. They say:

My Lord is One, there is none other,

He is realised by His Grace (Ramkali Var, III).

With Thy Grace one attains the highest state of bliss and narrates the indescribable story.

Thou art the Creator, everything is Thy creation, what is in the power of a Jiva?

(Asa, M. III).

Whosoever falls within His grace meets the guru

(Asa di Var, M.I.).

Through His Grace this attachment ceases.

And one merges in the Lord, Saint Nanak

(Asa, M.I.)

**E**ven an unabashed apologist of Hinduism and an inveterate denigrator of Islam, Havell, grudgingly concedes: 'Islam reached the zenith of its political strength when the conflict between Buddhist philosophy and that of orthodox Brahmanism was a potent cause of political dissension in northern India....'

'The social programme of the prophet (Mohammad) ... gave

every true believer an equal status ... The alluring prospect which it held out to the lower strata of Hindu society was as tempting as it was to the Bedouins of the desert....'

'Those who (embraced Islam) acquired all rights of a Mussalman citizen in the law courts, where the *Qur'an* and not the Aryan law and custom decided disputes in all cases. This method of proselytising was very effective among the lower caste Hindus, especially among those who suffered from the severity of Brahmanically law with regard to 'impure' classes.... It made the *Sudra* a free man and potentially a lord of the Brahmin....'

'It was, thus, not the philosophy of Islam but its sociological programme which won so many converts for it in India'.

### An Alternative To Islam And Hinduism

Nanak offered an 'indigenous' alternative to counter the Islamic onslaught on the ancient Indian cultural and spiritual heritage by emphasising the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity, by rejecting the belief in renunciation of the world for attaining supposedly spiritual virtues. That he struck a sympathetic chord among the masses is obvious from the fact that he won a large following during his lifetime. According to Aziz Ahmed, the noted historian of

the Indo-Pak sub-continent, 'Nanak's syncretic appeal was ... primarily directed towards the lower caste Hindus'.

**A**fter twenty-five years of missionary tours, Nanak settled on a piece of land on the western side of the river Ravi. There founded a new village, Kartarpur, the abode of God, now in Pakistan, not to be confused with Kartarpur in Jullundur district in India. Here, he spent the last 17 years of his life with his family and some disciples, earning his living by cultivating land. He spent a good deal of his time in prayer, meditation and preaching. His followers offered prayers at his home — neither at a Hindu temple nor at a Muslim place of worship.

Nanak would grant audience only to those who would have their food in the community kitchen — *Guru-da-langar* — where the Brahmin, the Shudra, the Hindu and the Muslim sat side by side, an anathema to both the caste-conscious Hindus and the power-mad Muslims. This was his way of inculcating humility, equality and fraternity among human beings, high and low, Hindu and Muslim.

To put his precept into practice, Nanak told his followers to rear a family, earn their bread by the sweat of their brow and be useful members of society.

That is why today Sikhs have no taboos against any profession. Through the institutions of *sangat* (religious congregation), and *pangat* (partaking of food in the community kitchen) and emphasis on *Kirt* (learning one's livelihood with one's own efforts) and *karma* (righteous deed), Nanak evolved the concept of *raj mein yog* (living the life of a yogi while duly performing the chores of daily life). His was the religion of the house-holder and for the house-holder. He himself was an embodiment of a householder-saint (*griha tapaswi*). Thus, 'Nanak's conception of religion', according to Dr Tara Chand, author of *The Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, 'was severely practical and sternly ethical.... Its spirit of non-compromise with evil (social, economic, political and religious) carried within it possibilities of martyrdom and the seeds of an organised church'.

Nanak died in 1539 at 70. By then the seed of the new religion had sprouted. It blossomed in the course of the next two centuries and has not withered away until today. Both Hinduism and Islam have been kept at a respectable distance, though Sikhism is hostile to neither.

Excerpts from the author's forthcoming book entitled *The Sikhs: crisis of Identity*. Ajanta Publishers, 1 U.B. Jawahar Nagar, Bungalow Road, Delhi - 110007; Price Rs. 200; £ 15; \$ 20.

Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, is of considerable value for the empirical evidence he brings to lay bare the near appropriation of religion by considerations of the Sikh elite for political power in the secular domain.

His findings validate an important hypothesis which he went about to test scientifically on grounds of carefully collected empirical data. The study covers the period from reorganisation of the State in 1966 to 1980. These findings may be summarised as under.

### Control of SGPC

This religious institution (SGPC) is controlled predominantly by members who are politically oriented and came to it with motives of power in the secular political domain. Only 8.74 per cent of members came into it with a religious orientation and only 10.68 per cent were recruited on the basis of their religious merit. Higher positions in the SGPC were "monopolised" by those who were political activists. A large number of members belonged to relatively affluent sections of the village farmers and their dominance in decision-making had been increasing. Women and non-Jat sections were only marginally represented. Reservations for scheduled castes ensured their subordinate presence. It also formally validated caste in a community which rose as a revolt against casteism.

A probe into the motives of those who contested elections to the SGPC showed that nearly 71 per cent of them aspired to be members of the State Legislative Assembly or the Lok Sabha. Entry into this religious institution was viewed as a threshold for entry to the Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha. Since the character of the power positions and decision-making structures in the SGPC was "extremely oligarchic", it was found "highly conducive" for the fulfilment on such aspirations. This was also facilitated by the emphasis on inseparability of religion and politics. However, a survey of the issues taken up for decisions in the SGPC and observations of the respondents showed that "the Sikh elite in the SGPC largely tend to follow a model which permits the supremacy of the secular interests over the religious concerns. So, according to the author, religion has not only been a "weak factor" in determining their attitudes, but also that "political values of these members operate independently of religious values". Further, since political attitudes and values related to economic interests, a conflict of values made religion a "weak factor for promoting political consensus in this community in general" and in the SGPC in particular.

It sheds the popular illusion that institutions dealing with matters of religion are either altruistic or broadly concerned about the interests of the whole community transcending diverse social interests. The continuing contention between conflicting social interests and Panthic cohesion makes the cry of 'Panth in danger' louder when political conflicts become more fierce i.e. when Panthic cohesion is threatened gravely from within.

Courtesy:

Art of Living, Amritsar.



# DHAMMAK DHUM

Another Approach to Writing for Children



The following poems are from 'Dhammak Dhum; Bachon Ke Geet' by Kamla Bhasin; illustrated by Micky Patel. The English transcreation is by Bina Agarwal and the Punjabi translation by the author herself. Published by UNICEF Information Service, UNICEF House, 73 Lodhi Estate, New Delhi - 110 003.

When our daughter was just over a year old we started introducing her to books. This is when I became interested in children's books and started looking at them critically. I found that sexism (discrimination on the basis of sex) was rampant even in books for little children. The traditional stereotyped images of boys and girls were repeated and reinforced by a large number of books.

For example, I found most books were about boys and men; about their brave deeds, adventures, aspirations and ambitions. They were usually shown as brave, fearless and independent. On the other hand, whenever girls and women found a place in these books they were mostly shown in traditional roles as daughters, mothers, wives, lovers and housekeepers, who were weak, fearful and dependant. One characteristic which seemed to be particularly admired in and prescribed for women was subservience.

In most books it was only men who were depicted as workers and breadwinners. If one were to assess the parameters of Indian society from these books, it would appear as if in our country there were no women farmers, labourers, teachers, engineers and doctors.

The reality however is that a large number of women have always been involved in productive work, for example in agriculture. They have not only been cooking food but over the centuries have also been equal partners in growing food. In fact, in contemporary society there is hardly any activity in which women are not involved.

In a fast changing world the roles of men and women also have to change and to some extent they are changing. When women join men in activities outside the home it becomes necessary that men join women in the work inside the home i.e. in cooking, cleaning and looking after the children. Changes become necessary in what is traditionally considered male or female activity.

Therefore, we need books which show women in different roles, in which they are shown as valuable human beings and citizens with dignity and self-respect. We need books in which girls and boys, men and women share household work and care of the young. Books which will help our children acquire values and roles for the new society around the corner.

So I decided to write a little book of poems / songs for children. A book which would break through the usual roles for boys and girls, mothers and fathers found in most books.

Kamla Bhasin



इतवार

आया इतवार आया इतवार  
असाँ सारयाँ दा प्यारा इतवार  
नहीं स्कूल आफिस दा डर  
मम्मी वी घर पापा वी घर  
पापा बणाके लयान्दे चा  
मम्मी पढदी है अखबार  
आया इतवार आया इतवार

## Champion Mother

Mother plays so many games  
She puts all other champs to shame.  
In football, watch her score a goal  
And in cricket see her bowl.  
In gulli danda no one's beat her  
And in swimming no one's fleeter.  
In hockey you should see her score  
In table tennis even more.  
Sports with her are always fun  
And such a super way to learn.  
Would you like to join us too?  
Play with us a game or two?



खिलाड़ी मम्मी

साहडी मम्मी बड़ी खिलाड़ी  
न ओ सुस्त ते न ओ अनाड़ी  
खुब खेल ओनान् आन्दे ने  
हॉकी क्रिकेट ओनान् भान्दे ने  
पिट्टू होवे या गिल्ली डंडा  
उच्चा रैन्दा ओनादा झन्डा  
पिंग पोंग बैडमिन्टन खेडन  
रस्सी कुहन गीट्टे खेडन  
असी चँगा खिलाड़ी बनना है  
तो मम्मी नू गुरु मनना है





# Begum Akhtar Lives For Ever

Avtar Singh Judge

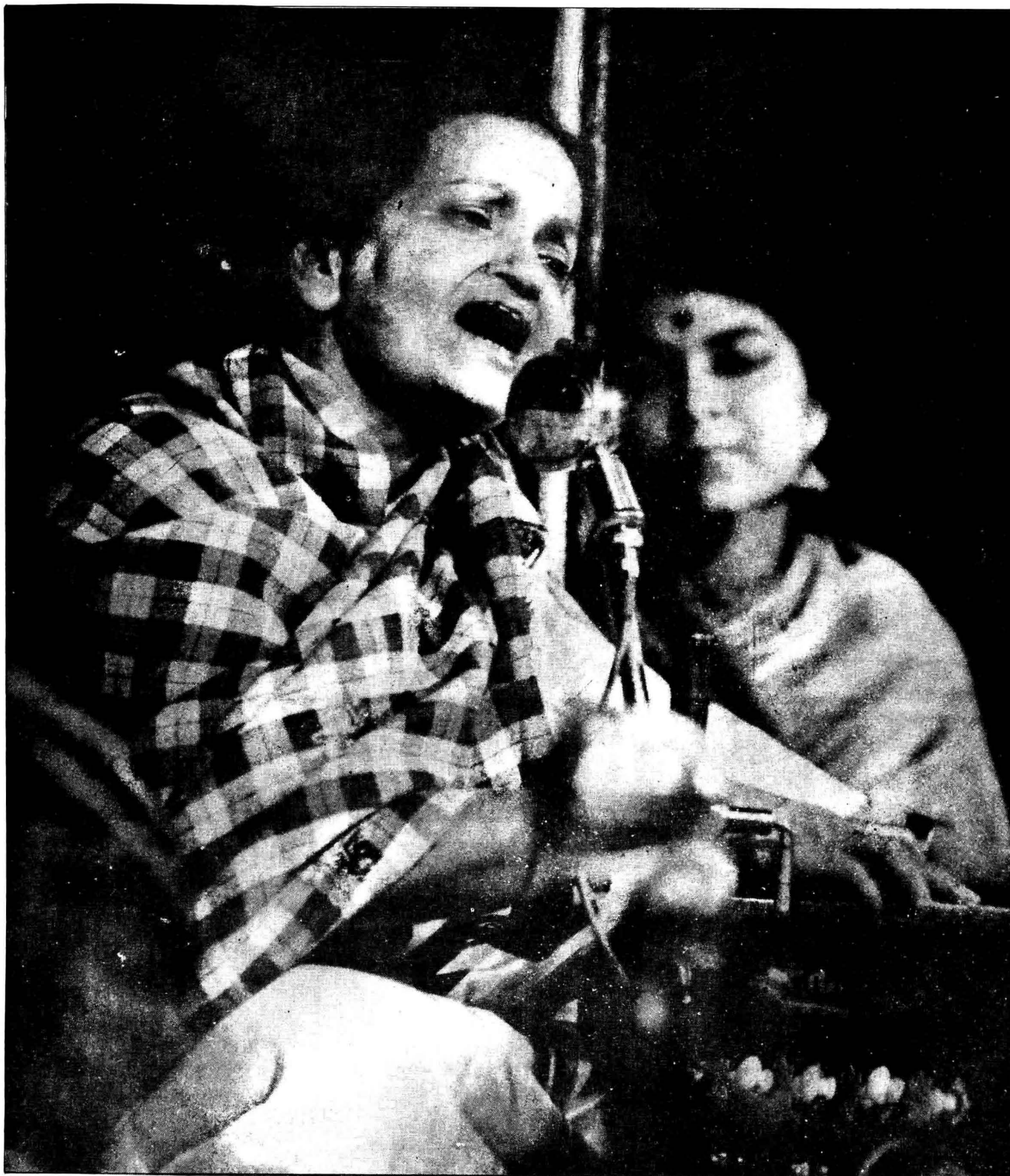
**F**or the many ghazal lovers of India and Pakistan, Begum Akhtar lives for ever in the music she created. Though she is no longer with her millions of admirers in person, her magical voice still brings joy and comfort. She gave the last concert of her life in Ahmedabad on 30th October 1974. Soon after this she had a heart attack and passed away leaving a permanent vacuum in the world of Indian music.

After the years since her death the people of Delhi, for whom she had given so many memorable concerts, came out again to pay her their respects. One of her disciples, an eminent vocalist herself, Rita Ganguly, conceived and organised a three day festival of Urdu poetry and music in memory of her great Guru. She invited prominent poets and singers, dancers and musicians from both India and Pakistan to come together on a common platform and give their performances in remembrance of the great Ghazal Queen.

Highlighting Begum Akhtar's contribution to Indian culture, Naina Devi, one of the most highly acclaimed artistes in the field of light classical music and a close friend of Begum Akhtar's, states in a tribute specially written for the occasion: "The lovers of Urdu poetry should ever be grateful to Begum Akhtar for popularising and propagating Urdu ghazals. A so called highbrow intellectual once said that ghazal is meant to be read and not sung. But had it not been for ghazal singing, especially that of Begum Akhtar, Urdu ghazal would have been confined to a handful of intellectuals only. Thanks to her devotion to ghazal singing, it today touches the masses. The couplets of Meer, Ghalib, Monin, Dagh, Iqbal, and Jigar, to mention a few, are today remembered through her music only."

## Perfect Fusion

Naina Devi has told the truth. Begum Akhtar created an entirely new music style. It was her musical genius that achieved



Begum Akhtar with Shanti Hiranand.



the perfect fusion of the delicate sentiments of the ghazal with the classical framework of the raga. She created a unique balance between word and music, meaning and sound, verse and musical technique. She took classical music and Urdu poetry into the homes and the hearts of the humblest and the most unschooled among us. This is what explains her phenomenal popularity with the upper classes and the masses.

The festival was a treat for her admirers in another way, because many participants, who knew Begum Akhtar personally, brought out endearing episodes of her life. An incident typical of her was when, according to Rita Ganguly, she was once asked to participate in a music conference where famous singers like Gauhar Jan and Jaddan Bai were taking part. Having lis-

tened to truly great music by others, Begum Akhtar refused to sing.

## Kaifi Azmi Remembers The Begum

Like all great musicians of India, Begum Akhtar was above communal passions. Famed Urdu poet, Kaifi Azmi, who, in spite of a stroke suffered two years ago, came a long way to attend 'her' festival, had this story to relate — "Once I went to see Begum Akhtar in a hotel in Bombay where she was staying. I found her surrounded by a dozen people who were pestering her to plead their case before Mr. B.G. Kher, then Chief Minister of Bombay Presidency. They complained that some refugees had occupied a mosque and turned it into a temple. Begum Akhtar's reaction was sharp and instantaneous. She told

them bluntly "The mosque, a place of worship, continues to be a place of worship. So what is your complaint about?"

The Ghazal Queen sang to the last day of her life. Music was the very essence of her being and she sang wherever she went. She was a people's artiste in the real sense of the word. It is such a pity that our government, which spends millions on cultural activities, woke up to her greatness after she was gone. She was awarded both the Padamshree and Padma Bhushan posthumously.

During a concert in Delhi she said "I am immensely grateful to the people of India who have given me so much love. The only way I can show my gratitude to them is through my music, which I do..."





# GRANDMA IS OUT IN THE SUN

Devinder

Translated by Avtar Singh Judge from the original Punjabi

It happened right before my eyes. Grandma, who had been there in the room a while ago, was no more. She simply arose, crossed our threshold and went into the open. It was very much like her to prefer the light, warmth and sun outdoors to the dark and chill that pervaded the interior of our house. Now we are all alone in this darkness. Suddenly the air inside has become dark and we are feeling choked.

*Perhaps that is why tears have come streaming into my younger brother's eyes and my mother has just hidden her face behind a veil.*

Oh no! I shouldn't go back to it all over again! What I had in mind was a story — a story which goes back to a hundred odd years, and is connected with a unique village. They say that the youngmen of this village never sat idle. After the harvest, when little remained to be done, they felt strangely unemployed. To get rid of this

feeling, and to keep their blood warm, they committed daring dacoities in the adjoining villages. That was why their village was known as the village of bandits and robbers.

Then came a day when the village was renamed. They say that it happened when a marriage party arrived there.

It was an extraordinary marriage party. It came to the village in a caravan of camels. Considering the grand style in which the party had come, the village elders accommodated it in the largest and the most spacious haveli of the village. The young men of the village went all out to look after the comforts of their guests. In order to ensure that nothing was wanting in their hospitality, they not only loaded them with food and drink, but also made them consume a lot of it. Having fed them, they almost forced them to retire and rest. Being a village of strong and wilful people, it was only natural for the hospi-

talities to be strong and extravagant.

The ceremonial dinner passed off peacefully. The marriage ceremony itself was completed in perfect order. But then something which was least expected happened. Trouble began to brew over a matter which was perfectly innocuous.

One of the youngmen serving food to the guests saw that a member of the wedding party was having food and smoking a 'hookah' simultaneously. This he felt was rather distasteful. So he said, "Listen man, why don't you stop smoking while you eat?"

Now this man happened to be a distant uncle of the groom from his mother's side. Thinking that he was a somebody, he put his foot down and said, "How dare you stop me from smoking? Being on the groom's side, we have the right to do what we like ... and also do it any way we like. As far as you are concerned, let me see what

you can do about it!"

They say that an uncontrollable anger welled up in the young man spoken to in this manner. His eyes became bloodshot and he cast a 'knowing' look at the young lads engaged in service around him. The message went home like electricity. In the twinkling of an eye, the very people who were looking after the guests so devotedly suddenly started tightening their turbans and covering their faces. Someone produced a bundle of fighting sticks from somewhere and in no time they turned into the most frightening brigands. They spared only three persons — the groom, his father and a child companion of the groom. The rest of them were mercilessly beaten up. The blows from their sticks fell on all and every conceivable part of their bodies. All around the privileged companions of the bridegroom begged for mercy.

After this incident the people in the area gave the village a

new name. It came to be known as the village of those who beat up the wedding party.

*But, how does this story concern our grandma?*

After being chastised in this manner the marriage party was on the verge of leaving the village when an extraordinary thing happened. The very girl, who was to go back with the bridegroom's party as the bride, defied all well-established custom and did something which virtually forced her cousins and uncles to stop all the mad violence. She came out of her seclusion, caught the bridegroom by his collar and addressed him a forthright manner, "If you wanted to go back home yourself, then why did you accept me as your wife and solemnise the marriage by taking me round the sacred fire?"

Too scared to say anything, the groom looked awkwardly in the direction of his father. She immediately let the groom off, walked up to his father-in-law — and placed her head at his feet. Instantly the whole hulabaloo came to an end. The brigands uncovered their faces and became their normal selves. One of them, who was still in the grip of anger, admonished the girl: "You are a disgrace to our village. No daughter of this village has ever compromised the honour and dignity of the village elders like this!"

Continued on page 21



Continued from page 20

Anyhow, the net result of the entire episode was that the brigands became good and loving all over again and the members of the wedding party learnt an important lesson.

*And, this was how grandma was married.*

**Grandma was a person who had never learnt to accept defeat. People came and bowed their heads before her in shame for what they had done, but she herself remained straight forward and up-right all her life.**

It was an aunt of grandma's who first related the story to us. And that too, right in front of the old lady. We were all thrilled, as you too might have been. But, somehow, grandma did not relish the idea. Lately, she had not been well and this aunt of her's had come simply to enquire after her health. But instead of feeling grateful, grandma who was in her bed got up and proceeded to give her hell. Bursting with indignation she said, "To hell with you! Why should you dig up old forgotten things? Tell me, have you come here to rake up my past and make me a laughing stock in the eyes of these phantoms? (She pointed in our direction). Get out of my house and don't show your dirty face to me again...."

After that she kept rattling on and on in the same strain.

Grandma's aunt tried to pacify her: "Don't get upset my child. I didn't do it to hurt your feelings. The whole thing just came to my mind and I related it to them. Believe me, I had no mean motive in doing so. Come on, you be the judge yourself and tell them.... Didn't it happen exactly the way I described it?"

"Don't you go on and on with it ... you vile talker!" said grandma and continued, "After all, what business did you have to come here? As far as I know, no one sent for you to come and sympathise with me ... and, on top of it to indulge in loose talk about me and my husbands relationship. I can assure you that I didn't fall sick to give a vicious person like you a chance to stay with us and talk calumny about our elders!"

Grandma had no time for people who carried tales about others. But the truth was that she herself was quite prone to doing the same. She rarely let a chance go by to comment on other people's doings, and did it as if it was her right to do so. Whether this right had been bestowed on her by someone or she had acquired it herself was difficult to tell.

Whenever she came to know that someone in her age group, who had blind faith in religion, had been struck with some terrible affliction, a mischievous smile would spread on her lips and she would comment on it in her characteristic way: "Listen folks, you know that man Jasanda. He never missed going to the temple every morning and believed that his prayers would always keep him fit. I hear he has had an attack of paralysis."

She found it extremely funny and often had a hearty laugh at the simplicity of such people,

until her own tears would gradually wipe the smile of her cheeks.

Often, we tried to dissuade her from saying such things. "Come on grandma" we would say. "Have you no fear of God? Why risk the wrath of the Almighty. Who knows what will happen to us tomorrow?"

"Don't you worry about that", she would react confidently and add, "I am not one of those people who try to impress others with their fake piety. God is a terror for those whose hearts are impure. I believe in telling the truth, even if it is blunt. God only punishes hypocrites. Do you know what happened to that woman Maya. She always pretended to be completely immersed in holy scriptures. The Ramayana she had read umpteen times over. Gita, she knew by heart. You know, when her end came she lost her eye sight. True Lord, have mercy on us!"

What a way to seek God's mercy!

There were times when our mother — grandma's daughter-in-law would say: "Maji, it is not good to talk ill of the people who spend their time in remembering God."

Her retaliation was always sharp and quick. Addressing our mother she would say, "Look who is sermonising! You who talk ill of me behind my back all the time, you don't have any right to do that. All your visits to the gurudwara and all this mumbling of scriptures are of no use when you treat your elders like this. I don't believe in this outward show of piety. It would have you to know that I have been to a temple only once in my whole life. And that was Hanumanji's temple in my village. After that I swore never to do it again."

"But, why so grandma?" My curiosity had been aroused.

"Don't you pester me to tell you how it happened. I know you are always in search of stories", she said. But a moment later I don't know what came over her and she said, "Swear that you won't spread it around". And then, without waiting for my reply she began: "That was the time when I and Parsini, an older cousin of mine, were still very young. Now, there was this temple dedicated to Hanumanji in our village. Whenever we had a chance to pass by it, we noticed that Hanumanji's idol was splashed all over with bright 'sandoor'. That gave us an idea: How exciting it would be to remove a little 'sandoor' from the idol and apply 'tilaks' on our foreheads...."

"So, one day we had an early bath and went to the temple. Luckily, the temple priest was not there. So we wiped off a little of Hanuman's sandoor and began applying it on our foreheads. We were still engrossed in doing this when the priest saw us. He caught us and tied our plaits to each other's. After that he went to fetch our mothers. When the two ladies learnt of the magnitude of our misdemeanor, they gave us a beating normally reserved for hardened criminals. It was then that I came to an on-the-spot decision that there was no use reposing faith in a God who did not come to the rescue of even the most sincere worshippers. So, the two ladies kept thrash-

ing us while Hanumanji kept watching the show of us two girls being punished for nothing."

*But, how does this story concern grandma?*

It concerns grandma because it tells us how strong and wilful she was. Her character was like the mythological Ravana. Having taken a decision she rarely budged from it. If she once developed a dislike for anyone, she wouldn't let that person take even a drop of water from her tap. And if she liked someone, she showered pitchers of milk over the person. If she once decided to settle a score with someone, she fought with that person to the last. And if she ever decided to defend the interests of some helpless person, then she defended that person like a rock. All her life she fought against the privi-

leged and powerful. Herself unvanquished all her life, she conquered everyone and everything that came her way ... even things like cough, cold and fever. All her life she never swallowed a pill or took an injection. Perhaps, that was why we laboured under the delusion that she was immortal. Like Ravana, she had a distinct personality and many heads, which seemed to ensure for her an endless life.

That was why, I didn't believe my ears when they told me that grandma was dying. So far it had never occurred to me that this was possible. I always had the feeling that grandma will live forever. Whenever I saw her sleeping on her cot, I always had the feeling that she would be up on her feet the next moment and give one of us such a dressing down that

would keep the whole family quiet for a while.

But now when my mother has covered her face behind her 'doppata', and tears have come gushing into the eyes of my younger brother, I have a feeling that grandma has just gone out in the open to bask in the sun. She has gone because our house is dark and chilly. It is filled with a strange smoke which is choking us all.

Beyond our doorstep there is light, warmth and the glow of the sun. Grandma has just turned her face to the sun and her silvery hair has been suddenly transformed into the rays of the sun....

Grandma's story is long and gripping. How come, only those stories are long and gripping which tell us of people who have left us to live in the land of the Sun?





# Revolution, Theatre and Bhagat Singh's Writings

Renu Govil

"Terrorism is the failure of the revolutionary mentality to reach the masses."

Bhagat Singh

These were the words of the young, fiery Bhagat Singh who became a martyr to the cause of his country's liberation from the forces of injustice, oppression and exploitation. He did not resort to violence to destroy property or kill human beings, but to shock the people out of their apathy towards their fellow citizens, thus justifying the throwing of a bomb in the Assembly in April, 1929.

Starting his career as a rebel, he was proud of his militant Sikh heritage. He urged the Sikh youth to take a keen interest in developing and keeping their culture alive because he believed that was the only way that a society could progress. At the same time he asked them to beware of vested interests, which were there to fan the fires of communalism to divide the people against each other. He sought to lead his country's youth to crusade for an integrated nation, undivided by the narrow considerations of caste and creed. He sought to work for the upliftment of the masses from the morass of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, expressing his views ceaselessly between 1925-30 in various newspapers, bulletins and pamphlets.

## Nishant Natya Manch

Today, when the country is reeling under the impact of communal violence, his writings assume an even greater importance. The *Nishant Natya Manch* has done a commendable job in publishing his writings with the help of the Bhagat Singh Research Committee in Ludhiana.

In the booklet 'Bhagat Singh Ke Dastavej' a commendable attempt has been made to compile the views of this great son of the Punjab. There is no doubt that his views would threaten a complacent government merely interested in maintaining its power through the exploitation of people's religious sentiments.

Bhagat Singh's ideas have been a beacon-light for Mr. Shamsul Islam, a soft-spoken lecturer in Delhi University, who has been carrying Bhagat Singh's revolutionary message to the masses through the medium of street-plays, performed under the banner of the *Nishant Natya Manch*. The *Manch* was born out of the need to express the agony of the people against an unjust and ruthless bureaucracy. Initially started at the college level in 1971, it turned into a full-fledged dramatic movement by 1976 after the dark years of the Emergency.

## Repertoire of Plays

The *Nishant Natya Manch* has a repertoire of plays on issues as diverse as superstition, government policies, women's ex-



ploitation, corruption in the bureau, cracy etc. It's recent thrust has been against the spectre of communalism that is haunting the country, particularly in the wake of the violence that erupted in November, 1984. To highlight Bhagat Singh's ideas it has enacted two plays, 'Sadharan Log' by the noted Punjabi dramatist Gursharan Singh and 'Sabse Sasta Gosht' by Ajgar Vajhad. Together these two plays have had more than 2,000 runs to date.

'Sadharan Log', meaning ordinary people opens with two common men, a Hindu and a Sikh, standing peacefully and talking to each other when two fundamentalists come and shout, 'Hindu-Hindi-Hindustan!' and 'Sikh-Khalsa-Khalistan!'. Under their ins-

tigation, there is immediate hostility between the two, leading to meaningless fighting and blood-shed. Finally good sense prevails and they realise that they have been doing no good to each other and they present a united front, singing together 'Milke Chalo'.

Similarly in 'Sabse Sasta Gosht', communal feelings are invited when bags of meat are found outside a temple and a mosque. A lot of tension is generated between the respective communities when a third person comes and checks that it is only human flesh. The animosity dies down, while the people realise that the mischief had been deliberately created by outside forces.

These plays clearly embody Bhagat Singh's ideas that the ruling class has always exploited people's religious sentiments to bring about disharmony between them. They set the people thinking about these issues and thus seek to bring about social awareness at the political and cultural level.

## The Street-Play Concept

The street-play is a unique concept in itself. A handful of people, a few stage props minus the mike and the lights, loud music with simple instruments like a wooden hammer, tin-boxes, etc., is all that is needed to enact them. A bazar square, a street-corner, the precincts of a university or a factory, or a private farm is their usual venue. The dialogues are simple and crisp, interspersed with songs, incorporating the folk song element. The distance between the actors and the spectators is done away with and the people are encouraged to think about the issues presented. The plays have developed and modified the 'Epic-theatre' of the noted West German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht.

Since street-plays expose the working of the ruling system, they face a lot of opposition and repression from the government. Mr Shamsul Islam explicitly points out instances of attempts to ban or prevent such cultural expression. For instance, he cites specific incidents in Bengal where performers have been beaten up and murdered while performing plays; in Kerala where street-plays have been banned; in Andhra Pradesh where performers have been killed in staged police encounters. In Punjab they have been tortured; in U.P. a woman member has been raped to teach her a lesson. In Bombay, the playwright Gursharan Singh was arrested. But he accepts all this harassment as an inevitable part of efforts to spread the ideas of a person like Shaheed Bhagat Singh.

For the ultimate aim of the *Nishant Natya Manch* is to arouse people to struggle for Bhagat Singh's dream of a classless society.



## U.K. Sikhs Against Khalistan—I.K. Gujral

Continued from page 24

nal relations between the Hindus and the Sikhs came to the fore and a vast majority of the non-Sikhs were distressed at the conduct of the police and administration. We asked them to appreciate that the P.U.C.L. enquiries and the findings of the Justice Sikri Commission transcended the communal divide.

### Unanimous Resolution

The conference unanimously approved a resolution, which was drafted on the spot. It reaffirmed the commitment of Non-resident Indians to the unity of India and forcefully "condemned terrorism and the killings of innocents."

Interestingly, towards the end a group of five young men adorning yellow bands over their turbans entered the hall but sensing the environment sat quietly. A larger group of militants who had threatened to break up the conference held back by the British police at a distance far away from the Brent Town Hall.

The post conference feed back has been encouraging. Most of the Indian papers in UK gave a very positive assessment of the conference. Even the mouth-piece of the Jagjit Singh Chauhan rump was forced to report the conference in some detail though at the end it invited a debate regarding the issues raised.

## Sikhs Abroad For Khalistan

Continued from page 24

posed as the 'Defence Minister' by Chauhan from his "cabinet" for his fanciful assessment of future events. Parmar, a born visionary and a crusader, sees the birth of Khalistan in the India-China confrontation. According to him, the two countries cannot but go to war in the near future for establishing their respective hegemony over south-east Asia. When the inevitable war breaks out, Parmar says, Sikh soldiers, who, being disaffected, have been withdrawn from the Pakistan border and deployed on the north-eastern borders of India, will desert *en masse* to form the 'Sikh Liberation Army' on Chinese soil on the lines of "Netaji's" Indian Liberation Army. The SLA will later storm India through Aksai Chin to "liberate" Kashmir and Punjab.

### High Commission Pathetically Inactive

Dr P.C. Alexander's appoint-

ment as High Commissioner was less than politically astute. Having been closely associated with Mrs. Indira Gandhi's Punjab Policy, he is not liked by Sikh immigrants. What is more, he is totally ignorant of Sikh history, religion and psyche. He also cannot communicate with them in their mother tongue, Punjabi, or any other language intelligible to them. This is a fatal handicap as 80 per cent of the 2.8 lakh Sikh immigrants cannot speak English fluently or understand it fully. The remaining 20 per cent are even more critical of the Government of India's "repressive policies". Most of them, steeped as they are in western political philosophy, regard basic human rights as central to political stability and social cohesion.

Secondly, members of the Indian mission only repeat parrot like the official line. Suspecting every Sikh of being a terrorist, they do not care to

establish social contacts with them in order to have an inkling into their mind for identifying the "sore points". They shun Sikh immigrants like the plague.

Meanwhile, *Granthis* (scripture readers), *Ragis* (hymn singers) and *Dhadhis* (ode singers), under a seemingly holy pretence, continue to infuse seditious inclinations into the hearts of the Sikh *sangats* (religious congregations) against the Indian Government by drawing historical parallels with libellous invectives. Their preaching is, thus, a sword to divide India and Indians.

It is time New Delhi realises the gravity of the situation and radically changes its Punjab policy. If it persists with its mistaken belief that *Time* and *Terror* will solve the problem, it is living in a fool's paradise. *Time*, it will be well to remember, is also a trouble fermentor and *Terror* has never helped to solve political problems. These have, more often than not, pushed the problem outside the pale of conciliation.

## Govt. Misusing Sedition Charge

Continued from page 1 col 2

### Anticipatory Bail

Both Malik and Raj had to move the courts in Delhi and Bombay for anticipatory bail, which was granted. The Editors Guild of India, social scientists, civil liberties organisations and concerned citizens from all over the country have condemned this wholly trumped up and ill-intentioned attempt to harass, intimidate and slander journalists of the integrity and calibre of Harji Malik and Krishna Raj. For this it is not the Economic and Political Weekly, its editor and contributors who need to be in the dock, but the authority themselves.

The Maharashtra chief Minister S.B. Chavan is reported to have stated at a press conference on November 6 that there would be no prosecution against the EPW. But the charges have yet to be dropped. Not only do the charges need to be dropped, but somebody in the government of Maharashtra also owes an apology to the EPW and Harji Malik for having questioned their patriotic and entirely secular credentials.

### NEWSHOUND



By Rap

## PUNJAB STATE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING BOARD COMMITTED TO THE FARMER'S TRUST

Prosperity of the nation lies in the happiness of its farmers. Everything must be done to make mandis comfortable & convenient places to sell their produce. Net work of approach roads & link roads should be in good condition. Fair returns for their labour must be ensured, if the rising graph of production and productivity is to be sustained. The system should be free from all kinds of pricks. The smiles and glow emanating from a satisfactory harvest should not be dimmed with the dust of the marketing system. With this aim the MARKETING BOARD:

**HELPS** in the construction of pucca village approach roads to connect villages with the market yards;

**HELPS** in establishing kissan canteens, providing drinking water and lighting arrangements in the mandis to facilitate farmers coming to sell their produce;

**HELPS** in the construction of the pucca auction plat-forms, kissan sarais, cattle, cart and coversheds in the markets;

THE MARKETING BOARD also helps in quick disposal of agricultural produce reaching markets, with the help of mechanical handling units, weigh bridges, dryers and power cleaners, and above all with its dedication.

SARABJIT SINGH I.A.S.  
SECRETARY



# Most U.K. Sikhs Against Khalistan

Says I.K. Gujral

**Hardly noticed here at home there is a discernible change in the overseas dimension of the Punjab situation. Though the militants continue to sustain their aggressive bellicosity and forcible occupation of most of the gurudwaras, a silent majority of the Sikhs in UK has been distancing itself from them.**

**T**ariq Ali, of the "Bandung Group" recently commissioned "Harris" — a reputed establishment of opinion pollsters — to survey the opinion of the Sikh community in the Southall township of London. The poll findings, subsequently televised on Channel 4 of the I.T.V., were revealing.

Nearly 60 per cent of the respondents family opposed Khalistan and favoured Indian unity. An overwhelming majority, even amongst the 19 per cent that opined in favour of Khalistan, would not wish to migrate to such an El Dorado if it were ever to come about. Merely 7 per cent said they would.

Regarding terrorism, the opinion was even more categorical. 69 per cent said that the wanton murders were against the interest of the Sikh community. Only a fanatical minority of 7 per cent admired terrorist actions. But the survey also held out that there was a strong feeling that the Sikh community was being persecuted in India.

## Happy Surprise

These findings came as a happy surprise to various Indian communities in the U.K., particularly to most of the Sikhs. They were happy that the lies and the disbeliefs pertaining to their patriotic commitments had been so authentically nailed. The opinion poll also encouraged a few "concerned Punjabis" — both Hindus and Sikhs — to get together to form an informal "Punjab Unity Forum" — similar to the one we have in Delhi. To begin with, they were only a few, mostly successful professionals; businessmen and industrialists. They had kept their distance from all the Indian political parties and their UK counterparts and also from the Indian Mission. The encouraging environment motivated them to convene a one-day "Unity of India Conference" in collaboration with six other organisations who shared their basic beliefs and outlook.

The militants took it as a challenge and stepped up their telephonic threats particularly to those who had, at some stage or the other, given them financial support though mostly out of fear.

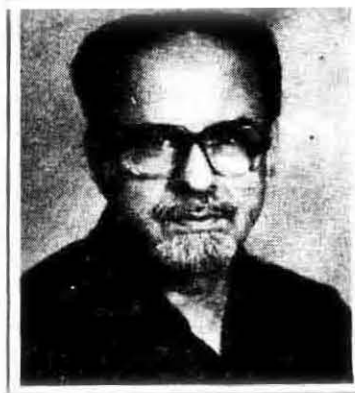
For some reasons the Punjab Unity Forum decided to invite S. Swaran Singh and myself to address the conference. On four

evenings I had meetings with different groups of Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs. The discussions were of course hearty and candid.

Their emotional alienation had been compounded by the governments policy, which made the whole community suspect. Similarly suspicions and surveillance hounded them during their brief periodic visits to India. They complained, with anguish, that an entire community was being damned for the sins of a few. Long indepth discussions were helpful. My non-association with the government and its policies and the track record of the Punjab Group in Delhi helped in projecting the essentials of Indian unity which transcended narrow party alliances and communal affiliations.

## Deeper Manifestations

On my part I wanted to understand the deeper motivations that had been so clearly manifested themselves in the Harris Poll. As a leading affluent



Sikh put it. "This reality was always there, only the media at home shrouded it. Our links with the homeland are deep and from a distance this emotional hangover gets more intensified." Another Sikh explained, "... in the pre-Blue Star era there was no trauma to strain our emotions. But the news regarding Blue Star deeply disturbed every one. The anguish continues but the perspective is gradually getting back the balance."

Things are not the same for the so called Khalistan government of Jagjit Singh Chauhan either. Most of his youthful adherents have been nibbled at by the more militant radicals while some affluent sections have seen the futility of his mission and have withdrawn their doles. As one of them told me, "... at one time I gave him some money — not because I believed in his Khalistani stance but I could not resist his cajolings. Subsequently, I saw his life style and the way money was being wasted; so I stopped. They threatened me too, but I did not give in. His ideological stance does not appeal to most of us."

## Levels of Affluence

With the passage of time, a substantial segment of the Punjabi community particularly

the Sikhs, have reached levels of affluence which are high even by British standards. With this has come the urge social recognition. Many amongst them now take active interest in British political life. I was told that nineteen ethnic Indians are aspiring for a parliamentary seat on behalf of one party or other. This, to a degree, has reduced their interest in Indian politics.

As an erudite Sikh put it, "Apart from the generational change, our prolonged stay and success has changed our class character and outlook. That is why the hook-up with the Indian polity varies from individual to individual and the extent of his/her success. The fundamentalists and the extremists are either (comparatively) recent migrants or victims of the soaring unemployment that hits the ethnic minorities first."

The prosperity and education has also enhanced their sensitivities regarding the "boorishness" of our Missions and the treatment meted out to them when they came here. The discriminatory treatment has also contributed to damaging the Hindu-Sikh relations in Britain as well.

## Nov '84 Festered Alienation

The November '84 riots also festered the alienation. Living in a different type of society they feel that the failure of the law and order machinery at such critical moments is inexcusable. Moreover, they are unable to appreciate the government's reluctance to punish the guilty or to publish the Misra Commission report.

Reaction to the Punjab killings by terrorists varied from condemnation to indifference. Like here at home, the Hindu-Sikh divide manifests itself while reacting to killings of Hindus in Punjab or of Sikhs elsewhere.

S. Swaran Singh took time away from his busy schedule in the UNESCO board meeting at Paris and came to London on the eve of the conference. The organisers anxious about the increasing threats from the militants, had decided to admit only invitees with proper identification. To their surprise nearly four hundred and fifty responded, paid a registration fee of five pounds each, and stayed the whole day.

Ambassador Alexander and some of his leading staff member in the High Commission also came to listen. Sardar Sahib and I spoke in the forenoon. Both of us dwelled on the theme of the unity of the Indian Nation and emphasised that the objective of a secular society was to forge a unity of these diverse cultural, linguistic and religious entities. All those who pleaded for uniformity of our pluralistic society did immense harm to our national life.

I particularly emphasised that during the November '84 riots in Delhi and elsewhere, the frater-

Continued on page 23 col 1

# Most Sikhs Abroad For Khalistan

Says Satindra Singh

**Contrary to the impression created by the England-based Indian mediamen that Sikhs living in England, though angry and anguished over the army action against the Golden Temple and the anti-Sikh November 1984 pogroms, are by and large anti Khalistan, I could find only a handful of them who did not support this secessionist movement. This highly unpalatable assessment is based on my meetings with a large number of local Sikh leaders, individually and collectively, during my week-long stay in England in mid-September.**

**H**ow do the Sikhs living in England feel was succinctly summed up by Kirpal Singh Sihra, the self-styled "Chancellor of the Sikh Commonwealth". He said: "For Sikhs, the heavy loss of life at the Golden Temple and all over Punjab, both in early June and subsequently, is only one aspect of the army's invasion. Sikhs all



over the world see the Indian Government's action not just as a massacre. They see it as an assault on Sikhism itself, typified by the army's deliberate concentration of its artillery fire on the Akal Takht, the highest Sikh seat of religious authority. Moderate Sikhs, who for years had advocated a policy of conciliation with the Delhi Government, were transformed at this one indefensible stroke into extremists and secessionists for whom any means are justified provided these lead as quickly as possible to the establishment of a sovereign Sikh State."

Sihra is neither young, nor semi-literate like most of his coreligionists in England. Scion of an affluent Kenyan family, he was educated in Kenya and Southampton University from where he holds a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering. At 20, he completed a remarkable design for a rocket booster system and is at present holder of several British patent and registered designs for his inventions. As a qualified pilot, Sihra saw service at the Royal Naval Air Station and in the Berlin Air Lift before working for a number of international carriers. In the early seventies he established his own aviation company in East Africa. Kenya Airways Ltd., later taken over by the Kenya Government. At present he is chairman and

chief executive of Cursair International, based in Nairobi.

Sihra is a typical case of a disenchanted person. For years before Indian independence, he was a "chela" of the late Krishna Menon. He is now as fanatically working for the establishment of Khalistan as his mentor and master had worked for India's independence.

There are, of course, at least a dozen organisations espousing the cause of Khalistan. But most of their leaders spend more time in denigrating their rivals than working for their avowed objective. Among the most prominent and active organisations may be named Dal Khalsa, Babbar Khalsa, All-India Sikh Students Federation, the International Sikh Youth Federation and Nankana Sahib Federation.

To an outsider this multiplicity of organisations may appear to be a fatal weakness of the pro-Khalistan movement. But its leaders find in this a source of strength. According to them, this multiplicity helps them reach a vast majority of the Sikhs who for several reasons, historical and others, got fragmented in the wake of establishment of the Sikh kingdom under Ranjit Singh in 1799, exactly one hundred years earlier.

In spite of various differences between them, it cannot be denied that an overwhelming majority of Sikhs abroad now stand for Khalistan and work incessantly for the realisation of their dreamland. For instance, Balhar Singh Randhawa, the moving spirit behind the extremist Punjabi fortnightly, *Awaz-e-Quam*, Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the self-styled head of the non-existent state of Khalistan, Man Mohan Singh, the Babbar Khalsa leader who is a fugitive from law in India and carries a reward of Rs 100,000 on his head, and Devinder Singh Parmar, editor of *The Khalistan Times*, speak almost the same language though they do not see eye to eye.

According to Randhawa, an angry youngman draped in 'Nila Chola' (traditional blue Sikh robe), the Sikhs have returned to the path chalked out by the Sikh Gurus after straying away from it for nearly 150 years. They have, he asserted, never accepted the supremacy of the Delhi Durbar.

Asked if the acceptance of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution would satisfy the Sikh aspirations and make them give up their struggle for Khalistan, Randhawa replied: "If it is conceded, the Khalistan movement will certainly lose its momentum, but only for a brief period. The Sikhs now have been awakened and are determined to have place in the sun in order to preserve and propagate their religion."

Devinder Singh Parmar is an enigma both to his friends and foes. He was recently de-

Continued on page 23 col 2